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A LIFE INTEREST.

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CHAPTER XVI.

A GREAT SURPRISE.

ELLIS prolonged his visit to town for a week after George's departure, and Marjory found that time hung very heavily on her hands.

Although she had never quite overcome her feeling of uneasiness when in his presence, the kind of distrust to which his cold insolence had originally given rise—he had amused and interested her—she was conscious that an under-current of mutual understanding had established itself between them, indeed, she was at times almost startled by the intuition he displayed as regarded her own unspoken wishes and the small difficulties into which her impetuosity sometimes led her. When she thought of it, she was half angry at the influence he was gaining over her. She did not like him, not really; yet when he came suddenly behind her as he sat reading or working and she felt his breath upon her cheek, when he spoke softly, she could not prevent herself from flushing, or her heart from beating with a curious emotion that was half dread.

During his absence, she forgot all this in a great measure; besides, her imagination was much occupied by Dick, his plans and hopes. She had quite made up her mind that he was going to be a great architect, a second Wren. How she wished she were a boy! boys had so many more chances than girls, as she was; though she felt she was not ignorant, she dared not hope for anything save the humblest kind of employment, as nursery governess, perhaps, which after all is only a bigger name for children's maid.

In this dull interim, however, Uncle Carteret did not let her VOL. LII. NO. CCCIX.

idle. He hurried her to finish the catalogue, and besides gave her letters in his own crabbed writing to his solicitor to copy, letters from which, without giving them much attention, Marjory gathered that the old gentleman was taking advice as to the sale of his property and the settlement of a sum of money on his heirpresumptive. A good deal was mentioned about breaking the entail, and, indeed, the correspondence bristled with law terms

which were Greek to Uncle Carteret's young secretary.

The accomplished old critic was remarkably irritable and hard to please, and Marjory longed for Ellis, who always appeared to have a repressive effect on his fractious kinsman. Indeed, she laughed at her own conceit and folly when she found herself looking earnestly in the glass the evening Ellis was to return in time for dinner, arranging flowers in her dress and otherwise taking special care in making her toilet. "I am a goose! yet I don't choose to look quite a dowdy when the 'ambassador' returns from the grand people he has been with," she said to herself apologetically. "I should take just as much trouble for George and Dick, and they would admire my pretty dress immensely; I am sure they are worth dozens of Mr. Ellis; but what a clever masterful man he is with all his smoothness!"

Ellis did not return alone. There arrived with him a friend of Mrs. Carteret—a much travelled unmarried lady of a certain age of good family and indifferent means. She had known Mr. and Mrs. Carteret for some years, and had written to offer them a visit on her way from the Isle of Wight to the north. Mrs. Carteret was charmed to receive her, for she was a complete encyclopedia of information respecting the inner life of the "upper ten" at

home and abroad.

It need scarcely be said that Ellis did not travel with her further than the short distance between the railway station and

the Priory.

He only made his appearance as dinner was announced, and had no time for more than the briefest greeting to Marjory. He spoke to her occasionally across the table, and but for him she would have partaken of that meal in total silence; their eyes met more than once, when Marjory smiled frankly, and Ellis felt that he was welcome.

In the drawing-room after dinner, Mrs. Carteret and her friend soon fell into an eager whispered conversation, above the indistinctness of which, exclamations of, "Incomprehensible, my dear!" "Extraordinary conduct in a woman of her rank and breeding!" "A perfect brute, I really can use no other word!" occasionally rose clear and audible.

Mr. Carteret and Ellis did not join them till late, and the latter at once walked over to where Marjory was sitting in a corner engaged on an elaborate piece of stitchery which Mrs. Carteret had given her. "And tell me how things have gone all

these long days I have been away?" he asked, drawing a chair between her and the rest of the company. His deep-set eyes glowed as he spoke, and seemed to fasten upon hers as if he would dive into the recesses of her soul.

Marjory was most indignant with herself, for her heart throbbed uncomfortably, and she felt that her cheek flushed and grew pale, why, she could not tell.

"Things have been just as usual; Uncle Carteret has been

rather cross, and I have been making some mistakes."

Ellis did not reply, his eyes wandered slowly from the fresh speaking face uplifted to answer him to the slight figure and busy

little hands.

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"One day we had a visit from Lord Beaulieu and his sister," Marjory went on, feeling his silence oppressive; "she is beautiful, but so sad. I was quite ashamed of myself; I could not help gazing at her. I should like to see her again."

"How is Dick?" asked Ellis abruptly.

"Quite well, and getting on so well. I had a nice walk with him on Sunday, and I shall meet him next Sunday if it is fine."

"And George?"

"I have only had one little letter since he left;" there was a

pause.

"I want to hear all about everything, but I must not stay now; Mr. Carteret is bent on whist. That gushing young person, Miss Danvers, is a past mistress of whist—see how she is smoothing the crust of Carteret's queer temper till he smiles—to-morrow she will charm both host and hostess, so you will be able to escape for a ramble with me and tell me your news."

"Very well," said Marjory, not knowing what else to say.

"I have something to tell you," added Ellis as he rose and went

over to Mr. Carteret, who had beckoned him.

Marjory whispered a request to her aunt that she might go to bed, which was graciously granted, and she escaped for a quiet hour's reading and thought in her own room.

When Mr. and Mrs. Carteret started with their guest to drive as far as Beaulieu and show her something of the neighbourhood, Ellis was nowhere to be seen. Marjory, however, was too much taken up with a couple of letters she had received that morning to feel in any way nettled by his apparent neglect; she was anxious to speak with him, however, as her heart was full and there was no one else to whom she could open it.

As soon as the carriage had driven away she took herself and her letters to her favourite seat among the scattered stones of the ruined priory, and read them carefully over again. While thus employed and as she half expected, Ellis joined her. She made room for him beside her and finished the perusal without speaking.

When she had folded up the letters and put them in their

envelopes, Ellis said, "I am going to take a great liberty; I am going to scold you." Marjory looked at him with slight surprise. "You have been spoiling your eyes with tears; your eyes are

meant for better usage, they are intended for smiles."

"They would be worthless eyes indeed if they could not shed tears," she returned warmly; "but I am not going to cry any more now, and I do not think it quite nice or kind of you to notice my eyes."

"Perhaps it was not," gravely. "Forgive me, and tell me

what has troubled you."

"I think I must, I have no one else to tell, and I am rather unhappy."

"Thank you. I shall be most interested."

"I had a letter from George this morning. He is to sail in a new ship of Rennie and Duncan's, next Thursday. They are going to Madras. He seems quite pleased; he says they are to have a son of one of the owners on board, who is to take the voyage for his health, so they will not stay away very long, and oh! Mr. Ellis, he says he saw you in London, that you are a jolly good fellow and would tell me all about it."

"There is nothing in all this to call for tears?"

"Perhaps not; but it is a little hard to have had such a short time with him, and then not to see him again before he goes!"

"This is not all the trouble, is it?"

"No; I had a note from Dick, and he says he cannot meet me on Sunday next, because he is going somewhere; and he fears he will be engaged on the Sunday after, too. This is very unkind of him! No one knows what may happen in a fortnight. I may leave this, and never see him again! He cannot care."

"Boys of his age are very thoughtless," said Ellis gently,

watching her as he spoke.

"Boys!" repeated Marjory as if speaking to herself. "He never

was a boy, and he never was thoughtless.'

"Then he prefers not to come; possibly he may have found some young lady who is not a sister to take his Sunday walks with."

Marjory started, and then laughed softly. "Of course it is possible, but somehow I never thought of Dick or George having a sweetheart."

"That does not detract from the possibility."

"Still he might care a little for me, when I am so fond of him! Of course I am fond of both my brothers-I have no one else to love."

"You consider it absolutely necessary to love some one?"

"Yes, of course. It would be too dreadful not to love some one! Fancy having no one to think of, no one to look forward to meeting, no one to trouble about, to have only oneself! Why, it would be too desolate! Even you must have some one."

"Even you," repeated Ellis with a slow smile. "Am I the

most heartless person of your acquaintance?"

"I did not mean that," said Marjory gravely. "I do not know you well enough to judge, but you seem to me able to stand alone."

"Perhaps I am! Perhaps I am selfish, yet for all you know I may be capable of a vast amount of love; I sometimes suspect I

am.

"I hope so, for your own sake," murmured Marjory, putting her letters back in her pocket. "Tell me, how did you happen to see George?"

"I asked him to dine with me, and to see 'Patience' after-

wards."

"That was very kind of you," cried Marjory, turning her eyes full of tender gratitude to his; "he has so little pleasure, poor

boy! I wish I had been with you."

"So do I," earnestly. "Well, I think George enjoyed himself, and he made himself very agreeable. Do you know, I was half inclined to call on Mrs. Acland."

"I wish you had; I should like to know what you would think

of her."

There was a pause; Marjory gazed upon the grass at her feet, and Ellis gazed very intently at Marjory. She had seldom looked more attractive; a quiet wistful expression stilled her face, her ripe red lips were slightly apart, her dark brown eyelashes swept her cheek, and her gloveless hands were clasped upon her knee. What admirable colouring, Ellis thought, as he scanned her hair, her softly rounded chin, the pretty oval of her delicate face.

"I had something to say to you," he half whispered at last.

Marjory started, her thoughts were evidently far away.

"Yes, what is it?"

"Nothing you will like, I fear. Your uncle has made up his mind to sell Langford, and I have found a purchaser. They—Mr. and Mrs. Carteret—will probably leave the end of this month."

"Ah! and I must go home! I am very sorry." She stopped abruptly, her mouth quivered, but she had self-control enough to keep back her tears.

"I suppose you must."

"I shall feel it much worse than it used to be."

"I fear so," said Ellis sympathetically.

"But I shall not stay at home," exclaimed Marjory with sudden fire.

"Where can you go?" asked Ellis.

"Oh! I cannot tell; I might teach little children, or read and write for some old lady. You see I am but half educated, and——"

"You are well read and more than usually intelligent," interrupted Ellis with an air of conviction.

"Do you really think so?" asked Marjory doubtfully. "Even

so, talking about things and teaching them are very different." Ellis did not reply, and after a pause she resumed, "I wonder how I should set about finding an engagement?"

"Advertising is the usual mode of making one's wants known,"

said Ellis absently.

"I should really prefer being a lady's maid or a housemaid to remaining at home," murmured Marjory as though to herself.

Ellis suddenly threw away his cigarette, and drawing a little nearer to her kept his eyes on hers as he said very quietly,

"Let me offer an alternative—suppose you marry me?"

"Marry you!" repeated Marjory, quite incredulous and unmoved. "I thought you were going to give me some serious advice, that you were rather sorry for me, and you are only

laughing at my troubles!"

"Laughing!" echoed Ellis, "I never was more intensely in earnest in my life. Nor can I understand your blindness. You must—you ought to have seen that more than a month ago I gave up resisting my love for you, and determined to win happiness if I could, cost what it might!"

"But I cannot believe it," cried Marjory, too much astonished to be confused. "How did you ever come to think of marrying

me?"

"Because—well, because I could not help it," returned Ellis, smiling and amused at the curious dialogue, though his heart beat fast and it tasked his habitual self-control severely to keep back the ardent words which sprang to his lips. But he was playing a deep game, and he resolved not to lose it from any heedless impetuosity.

"But you ought to marry some great lady. Aunt Carteret says you will be an ambassador one day, and I am not fit to be an

ambassadress!"

"I love you, Marjory!" said Ellis in a low voice. His tone struck to her heart. If he loved her, that explained everything.

"It is most extraordinary," murmured Marjory, her colour changing and an expression of tender solemnity stealing over her face as the fact that she was loved and sought in marriage penetrated her understanding.

"This humility is not usual in you!" said Ellis, who had expected a saucy refusal at first, but could not therefore afford to

lose time.

"It is not humility; I know that I am not unworthy of being loved, but I do not want anybody greater than myself, and then Mr. Carteret would never forgive you! You know he wants you to marry Miss Waring."

"He also wishes me to marry Mrs. Maynard. Unfortunately

I cannot oblige him."

"I have an idea that it would be bad for you to quarrel with Uncle Carteret."

"It would be rather ruinous for me just at present, even were he to know I asked you to marry me," said Ellis.

"Then do not think of me; besides, you see it would not be worth your while to vex him, for you know I do not-that is, I

am not in love with you."

"I know it but too well, my sweet Marjory! That is the reason I dared to speak so abruptly—so prematurely. You never seemed to see-I never could make you understand that I was trying to win you. I had so few opportunities, and you distrusted me so strangely! Now, do hear me. I am most infernally hampered, but I want you to give me a chance—a chance of gaining your heart."

"I know it is unkind to say so, but I don't think I could ever love you, though you are very nice," said Marjory, hesitating,

and dreadfully distressed at having to give pain.

Ellis smiled, while his dark eyes glowed. "You must and shall, Marjory! You have cast some spell upon me. If you love no one else, you must learn to love me.'

"It would be wiser not to ask me to try! I do not want to

love any one in that way."

"What! do you intend to reject everything but brotherly

"Yes, I find trouble and pain enough in my love for George and Dick. Suppose I were to love you," turning to look at him, then, finding his eyes embarrassing, averting her own, " and not be able to see you or perhaps write to you, it would make me more unhappy."

"But if you consented to be my wife," exclaimed Ellis with more fire than he had hitherto shown, "do you think I could endure existence apart from you? No, I should want you beside

me every hour—every instant of my life!"

These words and the tone in which they were spoken made a profound impression on Marjory. Had Ellis only shown the sort of light but flattering preference for her he had shown at Mrs. Waring's party, she might have returned it with some innocent girlish coquetry, but the offer of a man's heart and life was a terribly serious affair, and transformed her for the moment into a thoughtful considerate woman.

"But you said it would be ruin to you if Uncle Carteret even

knew you had asked me to marry you, how then——"
"It would certainly be ruin," interrupted Ellis. "But I do not intend him to know anything about it for a year or two."

Marjory looked straight at him with a puzzled expression which changed to grave displeasure as her colour rose.

"You mean to marry secretly?" she asked.

"I do. You must hear me, Marjory," said Ellis, catching her hand, which he held firmly in both his own, "I want you to understand how I am situated and what I propose; I want to in-

form you fully. I am dependent on old Carteret, and just at present I have almost, not altogether, succeeded in a most difficult and delicate negotiation respecting the sale of this property, to which I am heir, and the settlement of the proceeds on myself. I am not penniless, but to push my fortunes I need a larger command of money than I have; a wealthy marriage would give me all I want, but I can only repeat, I love you; the idea of any other woman is intolerable to me" (if he added "at present," it was mentally). "I cannot let you drift away out of my reach, I cannot leave you to be tyrannized over by a cruel woman, your bright youth, the period of love and pleasure, crushed and blotted out with premature misery! With me you would be tranquil, beloved, and sure of sympathy. Can your imagination not present a picture of what life might be with a lover for your companion, even though we were obliged to live in obscurity for a year or two, until I had gained a position which would render me independent, and I could proudly proclaim our union to the world?"

Marjory shook her head and tried to draw away her hand. "Obscurity would matter very little, but hiding is always shameful," she said. "Even if I loved you, I could not think of such a

marriage."

"If you loved me, Marjory, you would do that and more for the man you loved! You have enormous capacity for love, or I have

lost my power of reading character."

"I am sure it is impossible to say what I am capable of. Pray let me go, Mr. Ellis. Now that you know I do not care for you enough to marry you, I am sure you will not wish it any longer, and in a little while you will be glad. You must forgive me if I have pained you; I never dreamt you cared for me—I am not at all

the sort of girl you ought to marry."

"I am the best judge of that," slowly releasing her hand. "Do not imagine I accept this refusal; I felt sure you would reject me, but, Marjory, I can wait! I am no headstrong impressionable boy, who car be checked by a first denial; I am master of myself, and I am determined you shall be my wife! I am determined to rescue you from the barren existence, the poverty-stricken monotony to which you seem doomed, and show you what life and love are! There, you sweet little witch, I will not torment you more just now. You will think of me, I know, because your kind heart grieves for the pain you have given; let your thoughts picture the difference of a home with the man who loves you and a home under your stepmother's rule."

He caught her hand again and kissed it twice before she could

break away and run to the house.

He looked after her swiftly retreating figure and very deliberately lit another cigarette. "Not so bad on the whole," he said to himself. "There is more depth in her than I thought, and even more charm. Now, her heart and imagination will be my allies.

Did I ever think I should risk so much for any woman? The affair bristles with difficulties, but if she yields, I can overcome them. The conviction that it would ruin me if Carteret knew of my avowal will keep her silent; I am safe so far, I think she is loyal and she half fears me."

Marjory, her heart beating fast, took refuge in the safe solitude of her own room. It was some minutes before she could marshall the confusion of her quick crowding thoughts into anything like order.

Profound astonishment and uneasy dread were her predominant feelings. The astonishment, however, was linged with a faint pleasant sense of gratified vanity. How did it happen that he had come to love her when she was so indifferent to him? It was quite unnatural! Why, if everything was fair and smooth and Uncle Carteret himself ready to pronounce the nuptial benediction, she would not like to marry Mr. Ellis, she could never fancy feeling at home with or feeling quite sure he meant what he said. How awfully cross Uncle Carteret would be if he knew! She must be very careful to seem quiet and composed at dinner, lest he should suspect anything. "For Mr. Ellis' sake I must be very prudent. He deserves that at least from me," she murmured to herself; then, all alone as she was, she blushed at the idea of meeting Ellis face to face knowing that he loved her, and recalled not without a feeling of helplessness the absolute certainty of his tone when he spoke of his determination to marry her in spite of herself. Could he really be kind and good? His wish to marry her was certainly disinterested, and no doubt life with him would be easier and pleasanter than at home. Still something in her heart forbid the banns, apart from the idea of a secret marriage, which was utterly repulsive and indeed impossible. How could Mr. Ellis think of such a thing or suppose she would consent to a step so closely bordering on disgrace? Would any one else ever love her and ask her to be his wife? If some kind good man she could even like tolerably offered her a home, she would accept it, and do her very best to make him happy and comfortable. "Men like comfort so much. If Mrs. Acland made my father uncomfortable she would not have half so much power over him. Oh! if he only had not married again, I might be his housekeeper and do everything for him. I could love him well if he would let me! I will write to him now this moment; perhaps he will answer me this time."

When the letter was finished it was time to dress for dinner; then came the awful ordeal of going into the drawing-room and meeting her lover's eyes.

Ellis was extremely prudent however. He kept his eyes in order and spoke to her at dinner in the most friendly unembarrassed way imaginable. Afterwards he played whist with much amiability, but before separating for the night managed to whisper, "You will be glad to hear that I am going over to Beaulieu to-morrow to dine and sleep."

"Then pray look well at Mrs. Maynard, and see how beautiful and charming she is."

"I know her, and I am proof."

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. ACLAND'S VIEWS.

"Marjory," said Mr. Carteret, "show me the catalogue; is it finished?"

"Not quite; I have only one slip to copy, a few Z's."

"What an extraordinary confused mode of expression! you mean, I suppose, you have only a few works to enter the names of which begin with Z?"

"Yes, uncle; I tried to say it shortly."

"Hum! Brevity is the soul of wit! But I do not think you

have much wit, Marjory."

"Oh! I do not suppose I have; still, I hope you have not found me too stupid?" looking up with an appealing glance, for she felt depressed and helpless. She had not recovered the shock which Ellis had given her. His avowal had banished her original, perhaps somewhat childish self for ever, and startled her into sudden thoughtful tender womanhood, amazed and half frightened to find she was the object of so serious a passion.

"Well, you were rather trying at first, but I have succeeded in teaching you a little, and it will have been a useful experience for you working under my directions; indeed I felt it was right to give you a chance, and I hope you will be the better for it when

you go home."

"When I go home, uncle?"

"Yes; I do not think I shall remain here beyond the end of the month; we must go to London to prepare for a long residence

abroad, and then your occupation will be o'er, Marjory."

"I am sorry—oh, so very sorry! Could I be of no more use to you when you leave the Priory? Shall you not have letters to write and things to copy? and Aunt Carteret, who is so kind, she

likes me to read to her."

"Ah well, you see, when I have settled on permanent winter quarters, I am about to undertake a work of some importance treating of the Renaissance period and the fundamental principles of classic art. To assist me in this, I need the services of a man and a scholar; I don't suppose that you think yourself equal to such an undertaking, in spite of your high estimate of yourself."

"Indeed I do not," cried Marjory, much wounded and deeply regretting that she had stooped to ask a favour. "I well know that I am quite unequal for such a task, and I shall never say

another word about it.

"I am glad you are so sensible," returned Mr. Carteret drily. "Now give me the catalogue. I shall mark the volumes I wish to keep; when I have done so, you must make a list of them and they can be packed ready for removal. The rest, with the furniture and effects, are to be sold by auction in September or October."

"And all your curiosities, uncle?"

"Oh! ah, I think of presenting them to the museum at D—, the county town, you know, to be called the 'Carteret collection,' and so perpetuate my reputation for antiquarian acumen. Let me have that list also, Marjory; I have a great deal to do, and not much time to do it in. Have you heard from home lately?"

"Not very lately."

"I really must take this opportunity of expressing my serious disapprobation of your father's choice of a profession—no, not a profession, a calling for his only son, a gentleman, too, on one side of the house at least."

"On both sides," said Marjory gently but distinctly.

"Yes, yes, of course. I believe he is positively a common sailor!"

"He is what is called an apprentice."

"Just so! Now no gentleman is ever apprenticed to anything, and considering that your brother is entitled to his share of your mother's fortune, I insist that it is not correct either in conduct or principle to take advantage of his right to the life interest for the benefit of his second family. It is most reprehensible; while he is ready to palm his daughter off on any relative who will relieve him of her!"

"You do my father injustice," cried Marjory, flusbing crimson, while her heart beat almost audibly. "He hesitated to let me come; it was Mrs. Acland who persuaded him, it was Mrs. Acland

who wished to get rid of me!"

"Why does he yield to an underbred woman of that kind, when he had the advantage of having a well-born gentlewoman for his first wife? Of course, Marjory, you understand I am not finding fault with you. It is quite natural you should wish to come to us; I even credit you, whether justly or not, it is impossible to say, but I do credit you with some wish for self-improvement. Now, when you return home, Marjory, I think it is your duty to remonstrate with your father; you are indeed at liberty to tell him the substance of my remarks."

"It would be much more to the purpose if you told him yourself face to face," cried Marjory, boiling over. "How could any girl tell her father such things? He would be kind enough to us, and fond enough of us, if Mrs. Acland did not put him against us. It is her fault about George, and about me too! If I had not been miserable at home, do you think I should have 'palmed myself off' on you? for it was my own doing altogether. I did hope I could have been of use and that you might have liked me; as it

is, I have a home to go to, though it is not exactly paradise, so I can leave you to-morrow: I have money enough for my journey!"

"Why, Marjory, I am astonished at such a display of temper; I had no idea you were such a spit-fire! You need not be in such a hurry to run away, it would be extremely ungrateful to do so, after I have had the trouble of training you and you have become of some use. In short, I wish you to remain until we leave the Priory; and if you are offended at any expressions I may have used in my natural indignation at the way you are treated, I am sorry. As to speaking to your father, I always have made it a rule through life never to interfere with what does not concern myself especially, and an excellent rule I have found it."

"I daresay," murmured Marjory.

"Now, as you understand that I wish you to remain, I trust," loftily, "I shall hear no more nonsense about going away."

"Then please, Uncle Carteret, remember I stay because you ask

me."

"Oh! of course, of course; I really can waste no more time on these puerilities. Give me the catalogue of my antiques; there are a few I cannot part with: I will just mark them off."

Marjory felt the better for this brush with her uncle, it gave her confidence in herself and made him a little more civil; for Mr. Carteret belonged to that not inconsiderable class whose maxim is, "Kick him, he's down," and who are themselves im-

mensely improved by a thrashing.

It was a great relief to her that Ellis prolonged his visit to Beaulieu till the afternoon of the third day. It was a trial to her to meet his eyes, to have to speak to him after his amazing avowal. In his absence the reality of the whole thing faded; she began to think it was a sort of dream, a delusion on his part, that a few days spent among people of the world to which he was accustomed would dispel. Still she felt curious to see him again. She fancied she should be able to perceive from his first words, from the tone of his voice, whether he had come to his right mind or not. Sometimes she regretted that she could not like Ellis better. Suppose he were a man she could be happy and at home with, and suppose he were free to marry her openly, what a splendid means of escape from her trying position with her stepmother? "But no," was her usual conclusion to such trains of thought; "I know I am headstrong and prejudiced, I dare not marry a man I do not love! Now I am half afraid of Mr. Ellis, he always disturbs me, and that sort of thing would be uncomfortable every day."

The presence of Miss Danvers set Marjory free from the necessity of accompanying Mrs. Carteret in her daily drives, and left her a good deal to herself. The loneliness pressed somewhat heavily on her spirit; the outlook was not cheering, and the chance of being able to tell her troubles to Dick seemed very remote.

Next Sunday he was positively engaged, and the Sunday after he was not disposed to meet her, but he had some good reason; she

could not doubt Dick.

Having the house to herself, she ventured to open an old piano, which had been tuned previous to Mrs. Carteret's single dinnerparty, and to play the accompaniment to one or two of the songs she had learned during the previous winter. From this occupation she was startled by Ellis, who came behind her and said:

"This is a revelation. I had no idea you could sing."

Marjory started up in dire confusion. "How you frightened me!" she exclaimed, and stood facing him with alarmed eyes, her hand pressed to her heart.

"I see I have, and I beg your pardon. I kept quiet because I wanted to hear your voice. It is sweet and sympathetic. Pray

sing another ballad—I should like to hear a little more."

"It would be quite impossible," said Marjory, shutting the

piano. "With the best will in the world I could not."

A look of displeasure clouded his face for a second. "I am very unfortunate in exciting your distrust," he said. "I assure you, judicious training would do wonders with your voice. It is not strong, but it has some excellent qualities. I am a great lover of music."

"All the more reason why I should not try your patience."

"I did not ask you to sing supposing your singing would charm me, but because it would give me infinite pleasure to find in you possibilities of perfection in future. Your future, you see, occupies me a good deal."

"You are very good to me," said Marjory softly, with graceful hesitation, leaning against the piano, her fingers playing nervously

on the dark wood; "better than I deserve."

"If you think so," returned Ellis, "why do you fear me?"

"I do not fear you," exclaimed Marjory, suddenly conquering her embarrassment. "I do not fear any one, at least I hope not;

why should I?"

"That is a 'why' very difficult to answer. If reason always ruled, we should have fewer inexplicable sensations, rarer instinctive insight, profound calm and extreme dulness! You are too sensitive to be always reasonable. Come, Marjory, you have not welcomed me back! How have things gone on since I left?"

"Just as usual; Uncle Carteret has been rather disagreeable;" she gave him her hand as she spoke. He held it with a gentle

and increasing pressure, looking gravely at her.

"May I tell you why you fear me?" he asked, and went on without waiting for a reply; "it is because you know I love you—you know it better than I could describe it, and as yet you do not love me—as yet, sweet Marjory! The love may come then——"he stopped abruptly and drew her to him. She tried to extricate her hand; Ellis immediately released her. "Forgive me," he went on

in an altered voice, "I did not intend to bore you; I am not always reasonable either, you see. I suppose we may have tea though the mistress of the house is absent. It is a dull grey afternoon and will rain presently." He went across to the bell and rang. "You will be so kind as to 'pour out,' and I will tell you all about my stay at Beaulieu. Tea in the library," this to the servant

who answered the bell, "and light the fire, it is damp."

Marjory felt it would be folly, affectation, to make any difficulty, and both were soon seated at the tea-table snugly ensconced beside the fire. Here Ellis completely laid aside the lover's tone, and talked charmingly on many subjects till Marjory grew interested and at ease. First he scored most successfully, observing as he handed his companion some buttered toast, "I saw your brother Dick yesterday."

"Indeed!" she cried, roused at once to eager attention; "did

you speak to him?"

"No; you must remember he does not know who I am, but I heard of him. That artist *protégé* of Beaulieu, Brand, seems greatly interested in your—let us say brother, and thinks highly of his abilities. There is some talk of getting the architect, Jervis, a well-known man, to take him up."

"Indeed! I suppose that would be a great help to Dick?"

"Very great indeed. That Brand is a curious fellow. He has a history or I am much mistaken; at any rate he knows what he is about as regards matters of art; he will make the interior of Beaulieu a gem as to decoration."

"I suppose Dick will write to me about this chance?"

"Very probably. I am not sure he knows anything of Brand's

move yet."

"Oh!" cried Marjory, clasping her hands, "how proud, how delighted I should be if Dick turned out a great architect; they all thought him so dull and unenterprising."

"Except you, I suppose?"

"Indeed," returned Marjory with remorse, "I was as bad as any one else; I disliked and despised him for a long time, till I came back from school and saw how badly his mother treated him."

"Ha! a very sound reason for changing your estimate of his

intellectual faculties," said Ellis.

Marjory laughed frankly, "That sounds very silly, but, you see,

when I began to like him, I began to think him clever."

Ellis looked at her with an expression of amusement. "I fancy the young man has ability in some directions. If he is wise, however, he ought to turn contractor. Architects may earn fame, contractors pile up fortunes;" then he turned the conversation to building in general, and described some of the various styles he had seen in his travels, passing from these to other topics, and drawing Marjory into discussions which made her

almost forget he was her lover, so successfully did he divert her thoughts, and time flew pleasantly.

Uncle and Aunt Carteret with their guest returned and were

well pleased to find tea ready.

This spell of undisputed sway, when Mrs. Acland was free from the presence of her step-children and her first-born, was a halcyon time. Every member of the little household felt the

benign influence.

Never had Mr. Acland's little dinners been more perfect or the weekly bills more delightfully small. His accomplished wife, as she sat at needlework or walked with her children in the Park, a model of well-dressed, careful refined motherhood, often reflected with sincere self-admiration on her own excellence. Any other woman, she thought, having made so false a start, and having been deceived into so beggarly a first marriage, would have gone down and down to the streets and the gin palace, whereas her own resolution kept her true to herself, and she had managed to reach land at last. Was it terra firma? Well, yes, at present, and the longer she rode at anchor the more firm would grow her hold on the heart, the spirit, the whole being of her husband. He could not live without her, she must make herself more and more essential to him; she rather enjoyed doing so. After all, set her free from her own son, who was only a legacy of trouble from a man she despised, and her husband's children, who were useless burdens (indeed Marjory was worse, she was an everpresent enemy, who, in case of difficulties arising, might be dangerous)-set her free from these, and she would be a bonû fide good woman, quite suited to associate with the salt of the earth, indeed, a good deal beyond them in intelligence, ready to fulfil her duties, to make the lives of those who depended on her smooth and well-ordered, provided they bent to her authority, and ready also to sacrifice her own ease in order to carry out the system she considered best for others—and for herself.

The stars in their courses certainly fought on her side, as heavenly bodies ought. It was an immense gain this visit of Marjory to her maternal great-uncle. Perhaps the old man might take a fancy to her and keep her altogether. This, however, was a possibility not unmixedly agreeable. Mrs. Acland's dislike of her stepdaughter could hardly be satisfied with mere removal under advantageous circumstances; she would be better pleased to see her incur her father's serious displeasure, to know she was placed in some trying and humiliating situation, from which she could not escape without her stepmother's aid. Young and inexperienced as she was, there was about Marjory an instinctive doubt, an unconscious distrust of Mrs. Acland's fair-seeming

that roused that lady's deadly animosity.

Early in August Mr. Acland, according to the usual habits of

professional gentility, took his family to the sea-side, and having seen them installed, returned to bivouac in his own house, and dodge the perils of house-cleaning during his exits and entrances, refreshing himself with a weekly visit to his wife from Friday to Monday.

The presence of one or two neighbourly families of severe respectability and considerable social importance made this a pleasant and profitable holiday to Mrs. Acland, who was extremely anxious to form a "circle" of her own which would be a species of

buttress and an advantage to her children.

Mr. Acland greatly enjoyed his visits to Eastbourne. pleasant to turn his back on business, on querulous clients and hot dusty courts, for two whole days and nights; pleasanter still to find his handsome, becomingly dressed wife, with their pretty well-caredfor children, awaiting him at the station. Then the walk to their lodging along the parade, with the fresh salt scent of the sea, the sense of being welcomed and made much of, the placid satisfaction of seeing his wife smilingly saluted by Mesdames Brown, Jones and Robinson, the better-halves of eminent legal or mercantile men, all assisted to soothe and gratify him.

Then came a neat and appetising dinner, a stroll on the beach with the children, their disappearance with nurse when bed-time approached, and finally a quiet confidential hour with his admired

spouse.

"By the way," said Mr. Acland, breaking the silence which had succeeded an interchange of gossip touching what had happened since he had been last there, "I had a letter from Marjory—I brought it with me. She says," drawing out his note-book and turning over its contents,-" she says the Carterets are going to sell the Priory and are going abroad. She supposes therefore she must return to us."

"Let me see it," asked Mrs. Acland, holding out her hand. "Ah! addressed to the office, I see. No doubt she counts on your keeping the contents to yourself."

"I do not think so, nor is there anything in it which needs con-

cealment."

"Very likely; but you must know how systematically she distrusts and opposes me. I regret to say it, but I cannot help seeing how painfully jealous she is of your affection for me, how gladly she would sow dissension between us. I would not for worlds speak or act unjustly to your daughter, but the instinct of self-preservation forces me to warn you, do not let her come between us, my dear husband."

"There is small danger of that," returned Mr. Acland, smiling with a proud consciousness of power and superiority on his wife. "No one can interfere with you, my love, in my estimation; but I think you credit Marjory with more depth than she possesses. She is headstrong, troublesome, foolish, but I should say incapable of

scheming."

"So I used to think," said Mrs. Acland slowly, and proceeded to

read Marjory's letter.

"Very affectionate indeed," was her observation when she finished it—"the most affectionate letter you have ever had from her, I think. I am sure I am the last person to find fault with any amount of affection bestowed on you, my dear, but I cannot help feeling that it is strange, certainly inconsistent, that so warm a regard for you does not make her more amiable to your wife."

"Poor Marjory has rather an unfortunate temper, but I think at

heart she is--

"Not grateful! I fear she cannot be considered grateful; you see here she says, 'The country is very pretty,' et cetera, and goes on about it; then she writes, 'I should have enjoyed myself very much only Uncle Carteret is very cross and exacting, I never know whether I please him or not, still I should like well enough to go abroad with them, but I fear there is no chance of this. How happy I could be with you, dear father, if I thought you loved me and would let me do things for you. Believe me, I only wish to please you, and I hope when I come back, which will be, I fancy, soon, you will sometimes talk to me and let me walk with you."

"Now, dear," continued Mrs. Acland, folding up the letter, "do

you not see the drift of all this?"

"Well, I-I suppose she sees she has been troublesome and

wishes to make amends."

Mrs. Acland looked down and smiled. "It is a most painful and ungrateful task, my dear husband, to find fault with your daughter, to unmask the slight crookedness of her nature, which renders her so hard to manage, but I feel I should be false to you if I hid my real impressions, as I read this letter I see its bearing so plainly that I am amazed you do not perceive it too. First, ingratitude to Mr. Carteret, who has loaded her with benefits; then bitter disappointment because she has evidently been unable to control her rebellious unmanageable nature, and so failed to ingratiate herself with the old couple; and finally an effort to make all straight with you, as she is obliged to return to your house. Few girls of eighteen would show such a profound regard for self-interest as she does."

"Ha! you think so? You certainly are a close observer of

human nature; still I do not suppose——"

"You are farseeing yourself," interrupted his wife, "and it is to me curious that you do not remark that, anxious as she evidently is to put herself right with you, she never mentions me, and she sends the letter to your office, hoping it might escape my eye."

"She might have known we were not at home."

"She knew no such thing. Can you wonder, Robert, that I dread her return? She will estrange you from me, I know she will;" and with a heavy sigh Mrs. Acland leant her fair head against

her husband's shoulder for a moment; the dusk of evening had

gathered over them and there were no passers-by.

"Of that you need not have the slightest fear," cried Mr. Acland with unusual energy; "I will not suffer any child of mine to make your life uncomfortable. If Marjory cannot accommodate herself to the constitution of my household, why—why she had better leave it."

There was a pause. Mrs. Acland had found her opportunity

for inserting the thin end of the wedge.

"It would pain me infinitely to see your daughter obliged to leave your house," she said slowly, "but I greatly fear she will never be happy herself nor allow us to be happy while she is in it. You must see that she is an irreconcileable. George was always friendly; indeed, I am almost ashamed to say I prefer him to my own unfortunate boy. Had Marjory been responsive, all would have been well, but she is my implacable enemy; I am sure she would be glad to leave our house."

Mr. Acland listened without committing himself to any

opinion.

He was not sufficiently modern to have taken in the nineteenth-century notion of girls going forth alone to do battle in life's warfare. He heartily wished that his wife and his daughter would live peaceably together. If they would not, he knew well which must suffer defeat and exile; but for the present he would postpone the evil day of decision, and he closed the discussion by remarking that they must wait and see how Marjory went on. If indeed she expressed a wish to leave home, why, he would think about it. "Meantime, my dear, will you answer her letter for me?"

"No, no," returned Mrs. Acland, rising from the bench where they had been sitting; "Marjory would certainly imagine that I had prevented your replying. You must do so yourself to-morrow morning before we drive up to Beachy Head. You ought to write a letter which will show her that you are alive to her little peculiarities, and that if she expects a father's affection she must show a

daughter's obedience. Come, dear, it is growing chilly."

The answer which Marjory received to the outpouring in which her perturbed spirit had found vent on the memorable day when Ellis had asked her to be his wife, may be imagined.

It had been chiefly dictated by Mrs. Acland, and each word was

well calculated to sting and wound.

She was reminded of her many shortcomings, rebuked for not having secured the regard of her excellent relatives, who might have become valuable friends, affording some relief to a father already overburdened by the claims of a large family; reproached for her neglect of her admirable stepmother, whose unceasing efforts to befriend and conciliate her deserved a better return; also for the small trickery of addressing her letter to the office; and finally

assured that her best way to win the love her father was only waiting to bestow, was to conduct herself amiably and dutifully to the excellent woman who was the comfort of his life.

The passion of grief, anger and despair which this epistle roused in the fiery loving heart of the recipient may be imagined.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DICK MAKES A MORNING CALL.

MARJORY, however, was not without some compensation to balance the pain her father's letter occasioned her.

Next day brought a note from Dick, in which he begged her to meet him on the following Sunday. He had given up all idea of

meet him on the following Sunday. He had given up all idea of the engagement he mentioned, as he had news to tell her which she would like to hear, and also he expected to leave Langford.

Marjory lost no time in sending a hasty reply, promising to keep the tryst, and for the rest of the week was in a state of unrest, hoping that nothing would occur to prevent her meeting her friend and brother, and looking forward to the relief of reading her father's letter to him and of opening her heart on this and other topics.

It had been hard for her to keep silence even with Mrs. Carteret, who was by no means inclined to receive confidences of a disturbing nature; and Ellis would certainly have heard all about it, had not his declaration sealed her lips. To complain of home troubles would only be to furnish him with arguments for her taking refuge from them with him, and she was vaguely conscious that his eyes, his touch, the sound of his voice soft and low at her ear when he came suddenly behind her to whisper some remark, produced a strange and almost unpleasant effect, her heart beat fast, and a curious fascination seemed to paralyze her will, she could hardly help staying to listen while he chose to speak.

On his part, Ellis carefully abstained from overt love-making; any third person might have listened to his conversation and believed he was only a grave, kind friend. But for all that, Marjory felt that he watched her, and constantly cared for her, staving off little unpleasantnesses and smoothing her way with amazing thoughtfulness and ingenuity.

Marjory grew more at ease; she would like him so much if he always kept up this tone; perhaps he might change his mind about wanting to marry her. It was such an extraordinary fancy for a man like him—a man so much older than herself too.

There was, however, no reason why she should not speak of Dick to him, and so she ventured to broach the subject as they sat virtually tête-à-tête in the drawing-room after dinner, while Mr. and Mrs. Carteret, the rector and Miss Danvers were enjoying a

quiet rubber. Marjory had been thinking deeply over her needlework, picturing all that Dick might possibly have to tell her; Ellis was reading 'The Fortnightly,' and looking up suddenly caught her eyes. "Well?" he said, drawing his chair a little nearer.

"Yes," she said smiling, "I wanted to speak to you, I must speak; I have had a note from Dick; he wants to see me on Sunday, and he is going away; I suppose with the architect you told me about. Oh! I do hope nothing will happen to prevent me."

"No, we must manage too well for that," returned Ellis, laying

down his magazine.

"Miss Danvers is going on Saturday," said Marjory dolefully.
"No matter; if there is any difficulty you had better tell Mrs.

Carteret of your appointment."

"So I intend. I have no idea of making a secret about meeting dear old Dick; only he does not care to come here. Suppose the weather is bad?"

"Then he must write."

"Then he is going away soon and I may not see him for years. Of course brothers must go away, one does not expect to see much of them after they grow up, but I should like to bid him good-bye."

"Certainly; we must hope the best, and if the weather changes, why, I will see what is to be done." There was a pause, then Ellis resumed, "I found the first volume of Buckle's 'History of Civilization' on the library table just before dinner; who was reading it—Mr. Carteret?"

"No, I was; and when I heard the bell I jumped up in a hurry and quite forgot to put it in its place; I had better go and do so at

once. If Uncle Carteret finds it, he will be vexed."

"No, do not trouble yourself; I put it in its place, and I put a mark where the book was open. Tell me, does it interest you?"

"Yes, greatly. Why? do you think I cannot understand it?"
No! If you care to read it, you understand it, I presume; but

it is rather a tough book for so young a reader."

"I like tough books sometimes," said Marjory, looking down; "they seem to brace one up like walking across a breezy common, and they comfort me in an odd sort of way more than novels, much, much more than religious books, which, indeed, I never could read."

"Ah!" said Ellis, a long-drawn reflective "ah." "And do poli-

tics come within the range of your sympathies?"

"I suppose you are amused at the idea of my wading out of my depth," said Marjory good-humouredly. She had never answered Ellis sharply since she knew he loved her or fancied he loved her. "I do not know about politics, I do not understand them in the least; they are always going on, you see. When politics have grown cold and turned to history, people can write about them and explain them, but while they are boiling and bubbling, it must take a strong intellect to comprehend the mixture. To men who can see through the puzzle, politics must be intensely interesting!"

"You are a shrewd philosopher for eighteen, Marjory. You

allow me to call you Marjory, do you not?"

"Yes, if you like," with a sigh and a blush.

Ellis looked at her for an instant, then, as if for the sake of speaking, he said lazily, "And so if you were a man, you would go in for a political career? As a woman, what is your ambition?"

"I have none," with another sigh.

"I can hardly believe that. A bright keen intelligence like yours is rarely without ambition. What is your scheme of life? All thinking creatures have schemes of life more or less distinct; yours naturally has the deepest interest for me;" and he looked at her.

"I do not think I have any. I do not care for fine dress or jewels or a grand house, though I like pretty things; but I do want to be happy, and not quite useless. I should like to travel, to—in short, I scarcely know what I want, except to be different from what I am." A deeper sigh and a downcast look emphasized

the sentence.

"For different circumstances, perhaps, but I cannot echo your

wish to be different from what you are."

Marjory made no reply, and Ellis, turning the conversation, talked lightly and pleasantly till the whist party broke up; and Marjory's last waking thoughts were, "How nice he can be! how much he knows about everything; I wonder he cares about me! and I wonder I do not care about him! If he had not this unpleasant notion of a secret marriage, I think I would marry him; though it would be rather awful to be really married to Mr. Ellis, and I am sure he would get tired of me."

Sunday dawned cold and dark and dreary, with low-lying clouds and a steady down-pour of rain; poor Marjory was fain to confess that it was impossible to keep a woodland tryst in such weather. She was very disconsolate and distressed, and even drew down a gentle reprimand upon her head from Aunt Carteret for making mistakes and leaving out words when reading the psalms and

lessons, as going to church was not to be thought of.

After luncheon the party had assembled in the drawing-room, where a bright wood fire was crackling, and Miss Danvers (who had yielded to her friends' entreaties not to leave them till Tuesday) was detailing with much exactness the circumstances attending the purchase of a remarkable engraved emerald by her dear friend that delightful old Duca di San Marina, when she suddenly paused, and putting her lorgnette to her eyes, exclaimed, "Why, Mrs. Carteret, here is some enterprising visitor braving the elements to pay his respects to you."

"He must be a lunatic!" exclaimed Mr. Carteret.

"Perhaps it is Mr. Berry," suggested Mrs. Carteret.

"He certainly would not come over on foot from Gilston," said Ellis, rising to look out of the window. Marjory offered no suggestion, but flushed up and waited breathlessly for the result. Presently the door opened and Mr. Cranston was announced.

Marjory darted to meet him with outstretched hands, eager to save him so far as she could from the ordeal of advancing alone in

face of so many strangers.

"I am so delighted you have come! I never expected you," she cried. "Dear Mrs. Carteret, this is my brother, Dick Cranston."

Dick, however, did not seem to need either encouragement or support, he coloured slightly through his embrowned skin, but bowed with great composure and said, "I should not have taken the liberty of calling but that I leave this neighbourhood tomorrow, and shall have no other chance of seeing Marjory again."

"I am very happy to see you," murmured Mrs. Carteret, rather

bewildered.

"My uncle, Mr. Carteret," resumed Marjory with a slight gesture towards that potentate, her heart beating with pleasure and embarrassment. How was she to get Dick away from among these people? and they could not possibly talk before them. Here Ellis came forward, and offering his hand, observed, "We have met before, Mr. Cranston."

"Yes, I saw you at Beaulieu," returned Dick with his pleasant

frank smile.

Marjory felt she could have hugged Ellis for this friendly move; it emboldened her to say, "May I take Dick into the library, Aunt Carteret? I want to hear all his news."

"By all means," returned Mrs. Carteret; and Marjory, with a quick "Come then," led the way to the scene of her labours.

"You really are a dear good boy to beard all these lions to see me. It must have been an effort," she exclaimed, seating herself at the writing-table and pointing to a large easy chair, which Dick drew forward.

"No, I did not much mind; I should not have intruded without a good reason; but I had a good one. I could not have gone away without seeing you, Marge, though I was scarcely sure you would

like me to come."

"Like you to come! Why, Dick, I was ready to cry my eyes out when I saw the horrid rain, and I knew I could not go and meet you."

Dick smiled well pleased. "You are fonder of me than you

used to be, Marge."

"And you are very ill-natured to remind me how unkind and nasty I used to be; you know I love you nearly as well as I love poor George, so do not be disagreeable. Now go on and tell me

everything, every single thing." She leant her elbows on the table and rested her chin on her hands, fixing her earnest eyes on his face.

"I sometimes think you are a couple of quite different girls in one, Marge; you are sometimes so much older and more womanly, and then again you are just the same sharp, saucy puss you were

in the school-room at home."

"Ah! yes, I feel years older and graver, more troubled about the future, and—and changed in every way;" Marjory's varying face grew grave and dreamy, while a sudden sigh heaved her bosom. "But never mind me, tell me all about yourself."

After a brief pause, during which Dick sat very still with downcast eyes, he began his story of the fortnight which had passed since they had met. The chief event was a proposal from the architect to take him as clerk of the works to a building which was being erected from Mr. Jervis's designs near Hull. The original clerk of the works had resigned, as he wanted to join a brother in Australia, and Mr. Jervis at once spoke to Brand on the subject. "This is a step more in the direction of being a contractor than an architect," continued Dick, "and I should much prefer the latter, but you see I must live, and apprentices earn no wages, or next to none. I have very fair pay as clerk of the works, and may get opportunities of improving my architectural knowledge; anyway, I will be among stones and mortar, for which I have always had a passion as you know, and I see my way to independence, that is the great point."

"Yes, indeed, Dick. It seems like yesterday, that wild March evening when I came back from school and you walked in all covered with dust. You had just met your friend the mason."

"Ay, I think you brought me luck, Marge; and then when I saw you again I met Brand. That was the best of all, not that I think much of luck. The grand thing is to believe in oneself and to work with a will."

"I wish I could work for myself," said Marjory ruefully; "you are sure to get on, you will be a great rich man one day, while

George and I---"

"Well, we will stick together anyhow. Now tell me your news."
"I have nothing good to tell. Uncle Carteret is about to sell this place or has sold it; they are going abroad, and I am to be sent back to Falkland Terrace. How pleasant that will be you may judge from this letter;" and she drew the obnoxious epistle from her pocket.

Dick read it in silence. "It is harsh enough," he said, return-

ing it; "but it is not your father's composition."

"I know that, though it does not mend matters. Dick, if I go away to be a housemaid, I will not stay at home. I cannot live in the house with your mother."

"I believe it; but what can you do, Marge? girls cannot battle

with the world like men. Can you not persuade Mr. and Mrs. Carteret to keep you?"

"I have asked Mr. Carteret and he refused; I cannot humble

myself a second time."

"There must be lots of rich childless old people, Marge, who would be glad to have you to read to them or write for them; you have a nice voice and you understand what you are reading about," said Dick earnestly, quite absorbed in the consideration of Marjory's future. "I wish I knew you were well employed and happy. Do you know, I often lie awake at night thinking of you and feeling sorry and ashamed that my mother should have struck in and spoiled your life. Look here, Marge, this is my address for the next three months, you must promise to write to me everything; and more, if you are in any trouble send for me. I'll come and help you cost what it may. You must promise, Marge." He held out his hand and she put hers into it.

"I do promise, that is, if you are not too far away. But I do not think I shall get into any trouble, at least not so bad as to want more than a little advice. You will write to me often, will

you not?"

"I will. You know, as George, your real brother, is so far away, I must take his place."

"My real brother! Are you not my brother too?"

"Of course we shall always be like brother and sister, in our own minds, but I believe really we are no relations."

"Ah!" cried Marjory, "that is what Mr. Ellis says."

"Mr. Ellis! who is he? the fellow who shook hands with me in the drawing-room?" Marjory nodded. "Do you tell all your affairs to him?"

"No, not all. But it is a comfort to talk to some one sometimes. He is really very kind to me; and, Dick, he is rather a big man in his way, he knows so much, too, it is astonishing."

"Yes, he looks as if he were some one," returned Dick slowly, and then silence fell upon them. Marjory felt uneasy, Dick looked so grave, almost stern, and she was conscious of having coloured and hesitated when she spoke of Ellis. She would have liked to tell Dick everything, but that was quite impossible; she wanted to break the oppressive silence but no words would come, so she sat feeling and looking terribly conscious.

At last Dick said abruptly, "I do not like his face; I mean his

expression."

"Nor did I," returned Marjory, relieved to be able to speak, "that is at first; now that I know him better, he seems——" she stopped.

"Quite handsome, I suppose," put in Dick with some sarcasm.
"No," returned Marjory steadily. "But he is the only creature here that has been really friendly and sympathetic, and I am obliged to him."

"That is natural enough," said Dick in an altered tone. "Well,

Marge, you see, that is, you will not think me a suspicious brute or a bore if I say it would be better not to have too much of his kindness or sympathy? You are a nice little thing."

"I am much obliged to you, but I am not so very little," this

with dignity.

"Yes, yes! I daresay, Marge, I am making a fool of myself, but you see there's very little company or anything going on, and he might find it very pleasant to sympathize with you to a large amount; and you—you might miss his sympathy afterwards, and I can't bear to think of your being grieved, Marge, that is why I

ventured---" he hesitated and broke down.

Marjory, with crimson cheeks and flashing eyes, made quick reply, "I understand what you want to say quite well; you mean to say that I am an insignificant frivolous girl, who will allow a man of higher position than myself to make an hour's amusement out of my vanity and leave me lamenting. But you are mistaken. Mr. Ellis is my kinsman, he says so himself; he is a man I never could take a fancy to, and to do him justice he has not the faintest idea of finding a passing amusement in flirting with me; he is as grave as—as a judge when he talks to me; and he treats me with more respect than you do." Here Marjory's fiery glances were dimmed with tears: "I did not think you could talk such nonsense, Dick, such unkind nonsense."

"You must not be angry with me," cried Dick, by no means convinced, but eager to make friends; "I am only a clumsy fellow, and I am too anxious about you to stop and think whether I should offend you or not. Don't cry, Marjory, this is the last talk we shall have together for many a day; don't quarrel with me, like a good girl; you are the only creature in the world I have to

care about."

"Oh! I daresay you did not mean half you said," drying her eyes, "but you have wounded me, and all for nothing. I shall be leaving this soon, and then I shall never see Mr. Ellis again; nor do I care much, though I am grateful to him and always will be; but of course I don't care for him as I do for you. There! do not let us say any more on the subject; you can be very nice when you like, so do not be tiresome."

Dick looked at her wistfully for a minute, his heart too full of

one subject to take up another easily.

"When do you start?" asked Marjory, generously helping him.

"The day after to-morrow."

"How can Mr. Brand spare you?"

"Well, the decorations we were working at together are all planned out and nearly finished; at any rate he would not let me lose a chance; but I cannot tell you how much I dislike leaving him, he has been so wonderfully kind to me; then I feel somehow that he will miss me greatly, and his health is very bad; I fancy he has taken a great deal out of himself."

"He looks ill, or looked ill the evening I saw him. He must

have been handsome once," said Marjory reflectively.

"He is still at times, and he is a wonderfully pleasant companion, it is a treat to hear him talk when he is in the mood," said Dick. "Then he has such wonderful manners. If you saw him talking to Lord Beaulieu's sister, he is like a prince talking to a queen; and she never passes him anywhere, she always stops to speak with him, and the baby laughs and holds out its arms to him. I should like to know his history. He has been in good society, as it is called, some time or other."

"Yet Mrs. Acland spoke as if he had been a bad man,"

observed Marjory.

"He is not one now, at any rate; it does me good in many ways to be with him."

"Mrs. Maynard is beautiful and charming," murmured Marjory.

"She is a lovely woman! It is a pleasure to look at her," cried Dick enthusiastically. "What a gift beauty is! and her voice is so sweet! she often speaks to me. One day she said she was sure I was not in my natural place among workmen."

"And what did you say?" asked Marjory, deeply interested.
"Oh, I think I said, I hoped to do my work as well as if it were

natural to me."

"That was as much as to say it was not natural to you."

Then their talk wandered to George and the chances of his

return within the year. At last it was time to part.

"There is one thing I must impress on you, Marge, never mention that you have seen or heard anything of Brand. He particularly wishes our friendship to be kept dark."

"And of yourself?"

"What you like. I wrote to old Cross last week and told him what I am about. I gave him to understand he was at liberty to give the letter to Mr. Acland, so you can say what you like. Now I must leave you, and I hate having to say good-bye. You'll write to me, Marge? Tell me everything, and you shall hear of my doings if you care."

"If I care! of course I do. I wish you were not going, dear Dick, I am awfully lonely;" her voice broke, and she clasped his arm,

lifting her face to his as if seeking a brotherly caress.

"God bless you, Marge, good-bye!" said Dick with much feeling in his deep rich tones, and, stooping, he kissed her gently on

the brow. The next moment she was alone.

"You have been spoiling your eyes again," Ellis contrived to say under cover of an argument between Mr. Carteret, his wife and Miss Danvers that evening after dinner. "Had young Cranston anything tragic to communicate?"

"No; but I shall not see him for ever so long, and I shall have

no one at home!"

"And you need not stay at home if you do not like it. Marjory,

I restrain myself from teasing you with the reiteration of my hopes and wishes, but do not forget I am waiting your decision all the same, and I love you with all my heart and soul!"

About a fortnight after this interview, Mr. Carteret gave the order to move; and Marjory was obliged to announce her return home for the following week. The house from this time became the haunt of various myrmidons of the house agent, who made inventories, packed up books and various articles selected for keep-

ing, and infested the rooms.

Ellis, who had been more than once in town in the interim, was to leave for Paris, where he had succeeded in obtaining the appointment of attaché. Marjory observed that Mr. Carteret, who seemed in excellent spirits, was remarkably polite and friendly with his kinsman. She gathered, too, that the operation of cutting off the entail in order to sell the property had been accomplished, and the proceeds settled on the heir.

This was the business which had brought Ellis to Langford Priory and kept him there so long. It was a delicate affair to manage, and cost him both time and trouble. He was proud of his success, but another interest had come to mingle itself in his life, or rather a passion had seized him with unaccountable force.

Had it ever been foretold to Ellis that he would lose his head about an unformed, inexperienced school-girl, he would have laughed the prophet to scorn. He wondered at himself, for he never before had felt inclined to sacrifice any of his projects or ambitions to a woman; even now, though ready to run certain risks, he was more disposed to grasp all he wanted by a bold yet subtle scheme than to renounce an iota of his future plans. He was, as he boasted, master of himself, but not to the point of renunciation; rather he held his own will in check the better to concentrate his forces

and carry out the design he had deliberately plotted.

Circumstances were peculiarly favourable, and could he but overcome Marjory's provoking distrust, a distrust which added an extraordinary attraction to the fresh intelligent sweetness of this young recluse, he saw his way to some years of delicious companionship, which would leave him free enough, yet not cost her anything beyond temporary seclusion. What a pity it was that women should clamour for equal rights and make themselves intolerable burdens. A wife sub rosa, with all the charm of illegitimate secresy about her, would be quite fascinating; while some unceremonious form more or less binding ought to be quite enough to satisfy her scruples and secure her self-respect.

The day before Ellis was to leave the Priory, Marjory walked over to Dene Court to bid farewell to the friendly heiress and her mouse-like little mother. It was a pleasant visit and cheered the

young secretary not a little.

Returning, she was not altogether surprised to overtake Ellis

loitering at a bend in the road where a path struck off through an angle of the Beaulieu woods and shortened the distance to the

Priory.

"I have been on thorns for the last quarter of an hour lest I should miss you," he said. "This is my last chance of seeing you alone for the present, and you need not walk so fast!"

"Ah! Mr. Ellis," began Marjory eagerly, and then stopped short.
"Why do you check your impulse to speak to me out of the fulness of your heart? I think I deserve your confidence."

"You know why," returned Marjory, determined to be brave and candid. "You have been so good as to care for me, and—and I am always afraid of misleading you. It is not worth your while to risk anything for me, and I will not risk anything for you. You are going to Paris, where you will be busy and see nice people; in a little while you will wonder you ever troubled about me."

"You think so?" and Ellis laughed a somewhat harsh laugh.
"I almost wish I could! No, Marjory, I am not going to let you slip from me; I have not quite matured my plans, but I shall see you in London before long, as I shall have leave of absence for some weeks, and then I shall seek you in your father's house."

"I hope you will not, Mr. Ellis; Mrs. Acland would be sure to

make mischief of your visit."

"Do you not think me capable of out-manœuvring Mrs.

Acland? If I come, shall you be glad to see me?"

"Oh! I shall indeed! A friendly face will be something delightful in that house," cried Marjory with an irrepressible burst of feeling.

"If you dread your stepmother so much, why are you reluctant

to exchange her tyranny for my protection?"

"Well, you see," hesitating a little, "I am not married to her,

Mr. Ellis.

He laughed: "I understand, you cautious little witch. Perhaps after a week or two of home life you may take a different view. Believe me, I could make existence very pleasant for you. Tell me, is your chief objection the concealment that must shroud the first year or two of our marriage?"

"It is," said Marjory frankly. "But I must be truthful, and, indeed, I do not love you, Mr. Ellis, though I like you and am

grateful to you."

Ellis did not reply for a few minutes and then began to speak of the many pleasures a life with him would offer, even during the time that must elapse before he could make their union public. Soon—too soon, he thought—they came to the edge of the Priory grounds. Marjory paused.

"It must be good-bye then," said Ellis; "to-morrow we shall be en évidence." He took her hand in both his, looking earnestly into her eyes. "You do not care, eh? You heartless girl," smiling and kissing the hand he held, "you do not dream how hard it is to

be satisfied with this when I long for a parting kiss from that sweet mouth! You need not start and struggle to get away; nothing would tempt me to offend you. Some day, when you are my wife, you will wonder you ever refused me."

"No, Mr. Ellis, I never shall," cried Marjory, blushing and trembling as she slipped away her hand and fled rapidly to the house.

"She is not quite so indifferent as she thinks," murmured Ellis, following slowly; "time and determination will win at last."

(To be continued.)

ROMANTIC EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF LOUISE LA VALLIÈRE.

By WILTON WOLRIGE.

"QUAND j'aurai de la peine aux Carmélites je me souviendrai de ce que ces gens là m'ont fait souffrir," said the hapless Louise when her heart was nigh unto breaking.

What anguish of mind and contemptuous flouts had she not suffered before such pathetic words fell from her saddened lips!

The sentence, addressed as it was to the woman who was destined to be her last rival in the affections of Louis of Bourbon, Madame de Maintenon, had reference without doubt not only to her fickle kingly lover and Madame de Montespan, but also to the courtiers who had bowed themselves at her feet in fawning flattery in the days of her prosperity, wrangled for the honour of riding at her chariot wheels, written poetic nothings upon her charms and graces, and deemed her no less than angel, until the idol fell ruthlessly, displaced from its niche to yield its room to a fairer, fresher divinity, or in any case a more seductive one, who had wiled away the fancy of the Grand Monarque. Massillon himself could not have preached a more potent sermon upon the uncertainty of life and its future than did Mademoiselle La Vallière in that short and plaintive sentence. Few kings indeed have experienced the felicity of being loved for their own selves; yet without a doubt, of the many exceptional blessings bestowed upon Louis XIV. the purity of the affection of Louise La Vallière was one of the rarest.

Certain it is that of the many who jostled and cringed and bowed devotion to the great king, but one among them all possessed a passion for him which absorbed her being and rendered her dead to worldly wisdom and ambition.

Her love for him was the first and last of her life.

Was it possible that Louis, the all-conquering, when he powdered his six-inch wig with gold dust, managed to throw somewhat

of it in the dazzled eyes of his mistress?

To her he was as the sun in her social sky, and the world for her held but him and him alone; while for ourselves we see Louis stripped of his cinnamon-coloured coat, embroidered as it was with diamonds, bereft of his red-heeled shoes which added some four good inches to his height, and without the afore-mentioned six-inch wig; see him a mortal of five feet two, denuded of his fripperies, and to us he appears as he was, more or less heartless, not altogether bad, yet of indifferent virtues, his growth stunted, his brain not over gifted with brilliant talents, and certainly possessed in himself of but doubtful moral and physical courage.

And yet, "Dieu seul est grand," said Massillon; but somehow we infer that next to Him—so thought the worthy prelate and the court too for the matter of that—came His vice-gerent here upon earth, Louis the grand, the invincible, the wise, the conquering, the terror of his enemies and the admiration of the universe.

And if he appeared thus to mankind at large, Louise may well be pardoned for believing him to be greater yet in her love for

him.

To give her her full title, Louise Françoise de la Baume le Blanc de la Vallière was born on the 6th August, 1644, in the country of Agnes Sorel, not far from that Chambord where we remember Francis I. created duchesses by the grace of love. She belonged to a distinguished family, who came originally from the Bourbon stock, and who were established in Tours. Her mother marrying a second time, gave her a stepfather, M. de St. Reni, who was comptroller of the household of the Duke of Orleans.

She was brought up in the court of this prince, and resided suc-

cessively at Orleans and at Blois.

All her memoirs accord harmoniously in their references to her character for gentleness, her generosity and goodness, which traits were remarkable from her earliest years, combined with a wisdom as unworldly as it was unexpected when found in connection with a woman in her position of power in such an age at once so profligate and luxurious. Regarding her personal appearance the Duchess of Orleans (Elizabeth Charlotte) declared that to her the blue eyes of Louise outshone in their beauty those of Madame de Montespan, and that her whole appearance was that of modesty itself.

The Abbé de Choisny says in his memoirs, "In childhood we have played together a hundred times," and he thus describes her. "She was not," he says, "one of those perfect beauties that one often admires without loving."

La Fontaine's words seemed written for her, "a grace more

beautiful even than beauty's self."

Her complexion was very fair and tinged with the bloom of a wild rose, her hair almost flaxen, her blue eyes full of sweetness, her features being however slightly marked with the small-pox. In figure she was slight and graceful, but her walk was marred by a lameness which though insignificant was palpable.

"Her history disdains notes and commentaries, it is the eternal legend of love," avows M. Arsène Houssaye, when he finds it impossible to trace the mot-à-mot history of Louise's youth. Of her love affair many incidents are given as to her first meeting

with the king, but the most trustworthy and more generally accepted tradition is, that she and Louis were introdued to each other under the following circumstances: the young king—twenty-four at most—was strolling in the gardens at Fontaine-bleau, accompanied by two courtiers, Monsieur Guiche and Monsieur Beringhem.

They observed three young ladies also sauntering about the grounds in the cool of the evening, and that the girls strayed to

a statue of Diana, where they halted and sat down.

De Beringhem remarked to the king that very possibly these three friends had come to chat over their favourite court gallants, and proposed that they should creep nearer behind the friendly

shrubs, and so doing listen unobserved.

The three fair girls were Mademoiselle de Chemerault, Mademoiselle de Pons and Louise herself, who met destiny that evening in the form of the king. From the first he had been to her an object of the most sincere admiration. She was but eighteen, and though she had only seen him amid all the pride and circumstance and pomp of court life, she had endowed him in her heart with every virtue, and enshrined him as hero in the imaginative glory of her love.

Up to the time of the evening in the gardens at Fontainebleau it is understood that the king had never noticed her apart from the rest of the bevy of fair maidens who clustered around the French court, as, indeed, how should he, a simple modest girl

amid a bevy of maids of honour.

The king and his companions advanced yet nearer to where the maidens sat.

Said one, pointing to the statue where it stood bathed in the moonlight:

"I have always loved Diana"—this was Louise.

Mademoiselle de Chemerault responded by declaring in preference that she admired Endymion.

"You are two stupids," said Mademoiselle de Pons; "you like

fabulous personages, but I prefer real ones."

"Whom do you love, then?" demanded Mademoiselle de Chemerault; a question which entailed some lively chatter and girlish banter which was no doubt vastly edifying to the ears of Louis and his courtiers. Now the Count de Guiche had been an ardent admirer of Louise, and her companions rallied her upon the subject of his devotion.

The king crept closer as the conversation took a more pointed turn, and his vanity was fully fed by hearing Louise, after much questioning and contradiction, declare that while the king himself was present he was the only man upon whom her eyes

loved to dwell.

"Is there any man," asked she with girlish enthusiasm, "who can compare with him in the ballet?"

It is well known that Louis of Bourbon indulged in this pastime till the age of thirty-six.

"I see," observed Mademoiselle de Chemerault, "the king

pleases you because he is the king."

"On the contrary," retorted Mademoiselle La Vallière, "it is the crown that spoils him, since it takes him from the number of those whom we could love. Ah! if he were only not a king."

Upon hearing such beguiling flattery, which was assuredly too innocently meant to bear the interpretation which the eavesdroppers put upon it, Louis the gallant felt he could do no less than come forth from his hiding-place and throw himself at the feet of the fair maid of honour.

The consternation caused in this council of three upon the discovery that they had been overheard by the sovereign may be easily imagined; they fled on the instant, like startled leverets.

"Ah!" exclaimed Louis, as they disappeared, "she will not

love a king. Well, she shall love a lover.'

To his annoyance he discovered that the Count and M. de Beringhem had also formed an audience to the little scene. Guiche, as it may be imagined, felt no small chagrin at having heard his love despised in girlish pleasantry.

"Who is that girl?" inquired the king; and Guiche, to hide

his vexation and discomfiture, declared he did not know.

"My dear count," came the good-natured reply, "you did not know her, but you loved her."

Louis, determined to find out his young admirer, sought her among the queen's attendants, but did not recognize the fair maid of honour.

Anon, he went to seek among those of Madame.

"That is she," he told himself when Louise La Vallière read aloud a romance of Mademoiselle de Scudéri.

Doubtless he heard but little of the tale itself, but he remained the whole evening and became a constant visitor.

There is no doubt that the best love of his life was given to

Louise in all its entirety.

We are told that for a whole long month he scarcely dared to approach, or even to speak to her save through the medium of his eyes, which most probably were eloquence itself.

But a crisis was speedily reached. One day, in the park of Vincennes, a heavy shower dispersed the court. Louise's slight impediment in her walk may have detained her, and the king have seized upon so excellent an opportunity, who can say?

Certain it is that he overtook her. "My heart was expecting this shower," he said, turning pale with emotion; "do you not know that I love you, madame?"

"Chut! or I shall hear you," Louise replied in blushing

confusion.

The king by a hasty movement let her hand fall into his own,

and then in a torrent he poured forth upon the moment all his feelings, his hopes and his fears.

Down came the rain, but he recked little of that, and the

interview lasted an hour.

"Does not your majesty see that I am wet through?" she asked.

"Count the drops of rain," said King Louis, "and I will swear

to give you as many pearls."

"I was only surprised at one thing," said Beringhem at a later period, "and that was that the two lovers were not metamorphosed into a Triton and a Naiad."

How should he, the daily companion of the king, possess a doubt as to how such a fancy bred in the heart of such a

sovereign should end.

That Louis XIV. did love Louise with the purest love of which he was capable is perfectly evident; but when did not an utterly blasé man become weary in time of a woman who only knew how to love?

Her successor, Madame de Montespan, possessed an advantage over her displaced rival, for to her belonged that dangerous seduction of one who, if she did not love, yet knew how to make herself beloved. That Louis was just and kind to the children of Louise La Vallière is well known, and also that he was sincerely fond of them.

There were two, Mademoiselle de Blois and the Duke of

Vermandois.

The pathetic love story of La Vallière comes to us like a breath of her own favourite emblem, the violet, amid all the artificial

pomp and glare of the court of the Grand Monarque.

Mademoiselle La Vallière, writes the Academician, sanctified her love by her repentance. It was a saying of a father of the Church that it is more easy to find many men who have preferred their innocency from their baptism upwards, and kept it spotless, than to meet with one sincere and hearty penitent. Because so few are converted as they ought to be.

And if the whole Church stood amazed at the conversion of a prince whose devotion was not surpassed by the austerest votaries of the times in which he lived, we have no less reason to admire this in a lady who seemed singled out from a debauched age and the affluence of all sinful pleasures to be a miracle of penitence.

It is easy to judge by her pious reflections, gathered from her private papers, and made public about the year 1684, and which were written by Louise after her retirement from the court and recovery from a violent attack of illness, that her soul was deeply impregnated by the divine love.

In one of these papers she avows herself as contemplating the world much as the scene of a comedy when those persons who have slumbered in the audience are aroused at the end of the act, and stand bewildered that when wakened from their dream they find the gaudy apparitions are vanished, and that nothing remains but dust and smoke.

In another she bewails in deep humility the mirth which "cost her her soul and the favour of her God;" but we are told that in all her power she was never presumptuous, and that her hand was always ready to bind up the broken-hearted and to give alms to the poor. Had she not possessed many virtues would the queen

herself have been as fondly tolerant of her as she was?

"Will it be any recompense to employ the remainder of that time in Thy service which hitherto has been spent in affronting Thy Majesty?" she asks prayerfully when arguments are used to induce her to return to court from her temporary seclusion; "or will the divorcing those unlawful pleasures to which I have formerly been wedded satisfy Thy justice and blot out my transgressions?"

She wrestles for power to put away from her her darling sin:

"Oh! let me never forget," she cries, "that dreadful hour when Thou callest me to an account for my sins, when I beheld death ready to seize upon my soul and carry it away into everlasting torments, and let Thy infinite compassion be deeply engraven upon my memory, which in the midst of judgment did remember mercy, and rescue me from Thy fiery indignation."

The compiler gives these little volumes of her reflections to the world with the assurance that they are the most sincere and affecting models of a true conversion that have ever been penned.

Very probably out of mere respect to the modesty and humility of Louise La Vallière, these private papers containing her expressions of remorse would never have seen the light had they not been conveyed away from the convent by a lady "who esteemed it a great piece of injustice to withhold so profitable a help from those poor souls who are desirous to reform their lives and bid adieu to their vicious conversations," so the preface informs us; but there appears no clue as to this lady's identity.

"Look with compassion," implores Louise, previous to her return to court, "upon a poor sinner, tormented with the flames of an unlawful passion, who, like the Samaritan woman, begs one drop of living water to quench the fervour of her soul and her

thirst after sin."

Shall we believe that this appeal was unanswered? Rather let us think that strength sustained her which was not of this earth, to endure the bitterness of her return to a circle which was led by her rival, who, strange to understand, was eager to welcome her back with every protestation of delight.

Madame de Montespan must either have been absolutely sure of her sway over the vain mind of the king, or glad to vaunt her

triumph in the face of her almost fallen rival.

As for the king, he was not at this time so tired of La Vallière

that he was altogether pleased with her withdrawal from the court, but though glad of her return from the convent he had suggested a separate establishment for the duchess, and she felt that it was but the beginning of the end.

When they brought her a portrait of the king she turned from it with a bitter smile. "That is all that remains to me of him," she said; "a portrait! and even when it was painted he was not

thinking of me, for I do not recognize his look."

The Duke of Longueville at this time made overtures of marriage, and the king, though not over loving, was very easily jealous.

He charged Louise with the intention of accepting the duke's

"Sire!" she exclaimed, throwing herself into his arms, "I repeat it once again, before the king there was Heaven, after the king there shall be only Heaven."

The 18th of July, 1668, rang the death-knell of her love.

It was the occasion of a festivity given to the blonde amoureuse upon the conclusion of the war.

It cost who shall say how many thousand of francs and its splendour was spoken of for above half a century, but the morning of that day broke darkly for Louise la Vallière.

Madame de Montespan met the king in that labyrinth through which his earlier love had so often passed in the dews of the morning to meet him.

"What! So early out?" asked King Louis.

"Is not the sun arisen?" replied the politic marchioness, and the twain continued their walk until interrupted by Mademoiselle d'Artigny.

People rose early in those days, as the gardener at Fontainebleau, who cherished his best roses to gain words of praise from Louise,

could aver.

Widely different were the worthy man's feelings for the divine Athenais who tore his flowers leaf by leaf and petal by petal.

And in those years—seven long weary years, ye gods!—the heart of the hapless La Vallière was racked by the consciousness that from her frail grasp was slipping that for which she would have paid with what was dearer even than life itself to her then, her hope of Heaven, poor gentle Louise! so that she might keep entire the love of the king. His first cool rebuff cut her to the heart. It was before the festivity just mentioned; the war was over, and the Grand Monarque, whether eager for distraction after the more serious business of battle, or anxious to be surrounded once again by his curious ménage, sent for the court, and Louise, delighted in eager obedience to welcome him back, was the first to greet him.

"What, madame, before the queen!" was his stern reproof, the first he had offered her, and surely too deep a wound to have

inflicted upon her gentle heart for the affront of having learned

of him the art of loving him, not wisely, but too well.

A more unpresuming being than the duchess in all probability has rarely if ever existed; indeed in earlier days, when Louis, with but little respect for her modesty, courted publicity, it was she, retiring as the violet, her especial emblem and favourite flower, who endeavoured to stamp down smouldering scandal with her little feet, lest some day it should burst into a flame which should consume her.

As gradually she fell from her pinnacle of power, her whilom worshippers discovered that her limping walk was an absolute deformity and that her slightly wide, but sweet and expressive

mouth was an unbearable monstrosity.

'Tis the way of more worlds than the French one, and no less could be expected of a court belonging to a nation who applauded Marie Antoinette on her accession as loudly as they hooted and jeered and girded at her for being an aristocrat and called her "Widow Capet" on her way to the scaffold which they had erected for the beautiful Austrian.

Before joining the order of Carmelites she made a last effort

and appeal to the king.

"Sire," she said, "I am dying with grief, Heaven alone can

console me for your cruelties."

"May Heaven be with you," said the king dryly; "we cannot always move in the same circle; your heart loves nothing but gloom: as to me I like fine weather."

There could be no appeal further made to a lover so absolutely

cold.

The fire of his love which had burned with such vigour was none the less a dead thing now that the fuel was exhausted and its ashes raked out on to a chill hearth.

Madame de Maintenon, who had arrived at court, strove to dis-

suade her from thus immuring herself.

"You do not know all the suffering and renunciation of the world where God does not always come," she said to Louise.

The duchess smiled in her bitterness of spirit, replying, "Ah, madame, when I suffer among the good Carmelites I will remind myself of all that those people have made me suffer here."

The two ladies stood at an upper window of the palace, and La Vallière pointed a trembling finger to where her erstwhile royal lover and the Marchioness of Montespan might be seen entering

their carriage.

At length, on the 20th April, 1674, Louise threw herself at the feet of the queen, implored forgiveness as she kissed her hand, received a pardon freely given, and hastened down to the carriage which waited below to convey her to the convent of the Carmelites in the Faubourg St. Jacques. Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan meanwhile contemplated the scene from an upper

window with as much unconcern as though it had been a comedy or farce rather than the last act in the life-tragedy of a heart-broken favourite.

All Paris, eager alike for guillotine or carnival, gathered at the doors and windows along the route to see the fallen beauty pass to her living tomb. The streets themselves were literally thronged with spectators.

As the unhappy woman entered the convent she threw herself

upon her knees before La Mère Claire du Saint Sacrément.

"Ma mère," she cried, "I have always made so bad a use of my will that I come to place it in your hands never to resume it."

"My daughter, it is to Heaven alone that you must speak thus," said the holy mother as she received her.

"Ah, madame," said Mademoiselle d'Eperon, "Heaven will take

into account the sacrifice of so much beauty."

On the afternoon of the same day that adorable head of flaxen hair which had so often been caressed by royal hands fell severed in long curling tresses upon the stone pavement.

It is said that La Vallière looked down upon it with a sigh of half regret and left it there as though with it she put aside the rest of earth's vanities for ever; and yet, novice though she was,

her love for Louis, broken and saddened, remained.

"Let me not flatter myself," is her cry from the convent of the Carmélites, "that I have mortified my passions, for I find them revive in me with more strength than ever, and induce me to self-love, which is the more dangerous because by justifying these irregular motions it renders me deaf to the dictates of my reason and the holy inspirations of Thy grace."

She implores for:

"A heart which for the love of Thee will deny itself when there is any competition between the creature and the Creator, which will silence all the importunities of nature, that it may become the more obedient to the voice of Thy grace. By that love which has taught me by experience that there is nothing in this world worthy my friendship, nothing but continual troubles and base ingratitude, which has discovered to me by these gentle corrections that Thou art a jealous God and requirest the sacrifice of my whole heart unto Thee in acknowledgment of Thy infinite mercies, my infidelity and the sacrilegious misplacing of my affections." She lived for thirty-six years within the walls of the convent, one of the most humble of its penitents.

After an initiation of a year, Louise de la Vallière took the veil; and, oh, irony of fate, the whole court was present to witness the

imposing ceremony or rather the fresh sacrifice.

The king alone was not present, but Mesdames Maintenon and Montespan were there in their pride and beauty. Says M. Houssaye, "It was always at the convent that the king's loves

ended." Mademoiselle d'Argencourt of the house of Conti was the first victim.

Little is said of her, but we know that her place of retreat from the world that had tired of her was the convent of Ste. Marie de Chaillot.

And yet we call the lover of La Vallière the Grand Monarque, the magnanimous, the admiration of his circle, and what not else in terms of flattery.

In the awful year of 1793, the rabble crowds that had violated the tomb of her king and lover passed on to the burial place of the Carmelites and searched the grave of La Vallière in hopes of finding jewels, but they discovered nothing beyond the ebony crucifix laid upon her repentant bosom just as it had been when she yielded her spirit to Him who gave it.

But one more anecdote to prove how her intense and pathetic

love remained with her for Louis even to the last.

Seeing one day a sister of her order stooping down to drink from a well while she formed a cup for the water with her hands, she reminded herself with sudden anguish of an incident which took place in the forest of Fontainebleau, when her royal lover himself had drunk out of her palms, declaring with ardent affection that the water itself was converted into wine.

Sister Louise tortured her poor weary heart by retrospect such as this, and, so the story goes, kept the vow she then made never

to drink again.

Her humility in preparing to take the sacrament is very touching. She writes, "I would say inspire me by that grace with the self-same disposition with which the poor Canaanite prostrated herself at Thy feet. Look upon me, O Lord, whilst I approach unto Thee as Thou didst upon that humble stranger; I would say as a poor dog who is sufficiently happy when permitted to lick up the crumbs which fall from the table where Thou feastest Thine elect."

Penitence such as this needs no trite comment; if any may, in conclusion, be considered necessary, it is best supplied, yet once again, in her own words. She appeals to a higher tribunal than

that of man.

"Thou," she says, from between the cold grey walls of her convent cell, "Thou wilt judge me by those truths which not-withstanding my corruption have pierced to the bottom of my soul, by that remorse which Thou didst mingle with my most criminal pleasures, thereby to recall my heart. But, alas! I always stifled them, that I might the more freely abandon myself to my passions. Those lying vanities!

"And lastly, O my God, 'tis by the book of my conscience and not that of my ghostly guide by which Thou wilt give sentence upon that terrible day when Thou wilt pronounce my eternal

doom."

"JERRY."

By THE AUTHOR OF "MOLLY BAWN,"
"PHYLLIS," "LADY BRANKSMERE," ETC.

HE was starving! Not hungry as you or I might be, had we fasted for ten or twelve hours at a stretch, but literally dying for want of food. He lay back in the dingy doorway exhausted, half unconscious, his one friend clasped to his breast. His face was dirty and of a leaden hue, the lips a pale purple, and his hands were as the claws of some untamed thing.

Heavily fell the rain upon the darkening street; the chill, bitter fog of the December night grew momentarily deeper, and through it the raindrops pushed their way sluggishly. Little Jerry, lying in the comfortless shade of the dull doorway, scarcely heeded how the moisture came that saturated the wretched rags

that clothed his frame.

For two long days no food had passed his lips. The deadly fever that had seized on him a fortnight ago, whilst with him, had killed the sense of hunger, but yesterday it had left him, just at the break of dawn, and with its going had come a wild craving for food of some—of any sort. Wearily he had lifted his tired little head from the miserable pillow of damp sacking that supported it to ask in feeble tones for drink, for meat, to find himself in

that darksome cellar alone!

It was a horrible shock to the child. He had lain unconscious, caught by the fever's deadly clutch, whilst the woman with whom he had lived ever since he could remember anything had succumbed to that same fever's influence, and had died and been buried. A miserable drunken creature, in a way kind to him when sober, brutal to him when gin overpowered her, but as she was, the only protector he knew. Whether she was his mother, or whether fate had just drifted him into I er path the child never knew, but the sense that she was lost to him for ever filled him with an awful dread. He knew it when no voice answered his in the early gloom of that winter's morning, when his parched tongue had cried aloud without response. When he had dragged his worn limbs to the pallet where she used to lie and found she was no longer there, weak as he was and crushed by this sudden knowledge, he hurried back to his own bed, and with nervous, feverish hands sought there for something that in his terrified

haste he could not find. He whistled in a sobbing fashion, and at last, languidly, a tiny shaggy soft thing crept to him and sought his arms, and with the puppy, his only and most passionately prized possession in his arms, he groped his way to the door and found himself upon the street just as the first faint streaks of dawn grew in the sullen east.

That was yesterday. He had met a slattern on emerging from

his lair and had stayed her to ask eagerly, piteously:

"Where is mum?" and she had answered:

"Ye've the right to ask-y'ave! After given 'er the fever

as killed her. Get along wi' ye, ye young varmint."

He got along, and all day, oppressed with the weight of the idea that he had killed that woman, and oppressed, too, by the weakness that held him as its prey, he sat in shaded doorways or gaunt archways, hardly knowing that the demon hunger was gnawing at him. Not heeding either, because hardly able to bear the whinings of the starving puppy he held to him with such a

tenacious grasp.

But as the next day broke he knew that he wanted food, and a sickening desire for it arose within him. But how to get it! In all that big, great city of London, who was there to give meat to this poor stricken lamb? Not one! It was nobody's business! Many men,good men and true, were they sure he was starving, could they see him, was his miserable case placed exactly beneath their benevolent noses, would I know have given him sufficient to keep him in clover for the rest of his life. But then it takes so long to bring these miserable cases beneath the noses of the benevolent ones, that myriads die whilst the attempt is being made, and only one out of the many is saved.

It seemed to him that he must have dozed a while, as when next his dim eyes looked with discernment upon the world, the darkness of night was falling. The rain, too, was heavier, and through it the lamps that lit the wretched by-street where he

crouched, shone with a lurid light.

The little dog was dead, but the child did not know it. I am always glad to think he did not know that. He held it still fondly, convulsively clasped to his breast, and as the body was yet warm it did not dawn upon his dulled mind that life was gone from it. He sat quite still, his head drooping somewhat forward, and one could see that his face might have been pretty but for the stamp of death present, and of misery, now nearly passed, that disfigured it.

By-and-by, as he still sat there faint and sick because of the ravening and gnawing feeling within him, a young man came swinging down the dingy street—a young man, gaunt to emaciation, with hollow cheeks and deep-set eyes, and altogether a face suggestive of famine. It was not a good face! The devil had planted a line here and there in it—cynical curves round the thin lips, a mocking light in the eyes, a matured expression of scorn

towards the world in general. He looked as if he were always

carrying on a bitter warfare with his kind.

His clothes were threadbare, his hat shocking. Beneath his arm he hugged a handful of shabby books as if his very soul (although he would have scorned a belief in one) was centred on them. As indeed it was. A student evidently; out at elbows, penniless.

"Eh! what have we here?" said he, stopping abruptly before the half insensible boy and poking him with his stick. "Another

starveling! Come, speak up, child; what ails you, eh?"

Roused by this rude address and dreading all things, Jerry lifted his dull eyes and turned a suppliant smile upon his questioner. It was a woful little smile, entreating, imploring, and openly deprecating the blow that he so plainly expected. All his

poor little life long, blows had been his portion.

"So!" said the evil-looking young man with a sinister smile, "starving, eh? I was right, then!" He stared at the child as if musing. "Here, before one, lies a distinct atom of the vast mysterious whole. Here too lies a striking example of the absolute truthfulness of that charming little fable so sweet to the well-fed good man's ear. The Divine mercy! The everlasting love that will not let so much as one sparrow fall to the ground—to which the little ones are so specially dear! Here, I say, is an admirable illustration of it—a woodcut, let us say, an insignificant etching," with a glance at the miserably shrunken little frame of the child at his feet. He laughed aloud; a laugh that cut like a bit of cold cruel steel into the heart of the cowering boy. Was the blow coming now?

"You'll die if you don't look sharp," said the strange man after another prolonged glance at him, followed by a shrug. He thrust his hand into his pocket and brought out three coppers and a sixpenny bit. "Here, catch!" said he, chucking the sixpence to the boy, who by a superhuman effort caught it, and then turned a glance of passionate gratitude up to his unknown friend.

"Don't," said the latter with his unpleasant laugh. "I expect I've done you the worst turn of any. It was a gross liberty on my part to seek to prolong your days. You will fling that sixpence into the nearest gutter if you have a grain of sense; if not, make it last for two days. It is more than I shall have to live upon for that time." He paused and then said abruptly, "There's a shop round the corner."

The boy had dragged himself up by the lintel of the door with a view to thanking him properly in spite of his contemptuous prohibition, but with his last words the young man flung himself round and into the middle of the passing crowd, carrying his eager, wild, accusing face into the turmoil of the great city.

Jerry, still hugging to his breast the dead dog, moved slowly and painfully down the street, turned the corner, and stopped at last before the lighted windows of the cookshop to which he had been directed. A delicious perfume came from the open door, the window, aglow with gas, showed dainties so coarse to you or me, but so delicate to the famished boy that he almost fainted at the sight of them. For a minute or two he let his gaze feast itself upon the rich display, and then slowly opened his dirty emaciated little hand to look at the talisman that should give him his share of the good things he craved. His silver sixpence lay upon his palm, and the child's eyes grew bright again, half conquering the death-sleep that had so nearly closed them only now, as he stared at it. A whole, whole sixpence!

Alas! two other eyes beheld that sixpence at the same moment. A great, rough, villainous-looking creature, half boy, half man, peered over the child's shoulder, saw the coin, stooped yet a little nearer as a hawk above its prey, and then the little dirty palm

was empty, the blessed life-giving money gone!

Poor Jerry! A sensation as of a deadly chill ran through him, and for a moment he reeled heavily against the bars of the window. But after that it seemed to him that he thought no more of it, he gave in, and though not conscious of the fact, quietly surrendered himself to death. It was all over. No hope, no life—nothing was left! Perhaps, indeed, he scarcely knew how things went with him for awhile, but instinct at least led his dying footsteps back to the old horrible home—the loathsome cellar in the squalid court. With faltering feet, with a dull stupid despair upon his half-dead little face, with the now cold and stiff puppy pressed to his heart, he descended the stone steps, and like a wild thing stricken sore, sought his lair.

Inside all was still, all was dark. A horrible silence prevailed, a very blackness of darkness that might be felt. He began to be frightened, horribly frightened. He put the dog down and pressed the palms of his hands tight—tight against his eyeballs that he might not see the gruesome shapes of which the dread gloom seemed full. Teeming shapes that changed ever and ever, and drew nearer, and touched him as he thought—sometimes his

hair, and now-ah !-now his cheek.

And then the harsh racking cough, that had been his for a twelvemonth, caught him, and shook his thin little frame so roughly in its rude grasp that he had to take down his hands from his eyes to press them to that side where the pain was most cruel; but he still kept his eyes fast closed lest he should see those weird awful creatures dancing here and there in the obscurity.

He was cold—so cold! He shivered and shook with terror, and with something else:—that last dread icy chill that every moment crept closer and closer to his heart. And after awhile he sat down and let himself fall quietly backwards until his poor tired head lay upon the damp pavement. He put out a feeble hand, and finding the dead dog, mechanically drew it nearer to him.

And then a wonderful thing happened! All at once the cellar, it seemed to him, grew full of light! A light, strange, awful, marvellous, such as you and I have never yet seen. And in it stood—One!

A most gracious figure! Tall, a little bowed, and clad in a long garment, than which no snow, freshly fallen, was ever half so white.

And the face—who shall tell the divine fairness of it?

Little Jerry could not have described it then, but as he gazed on it, he knew all at once the fullest meaning of the words "Love" and "Peace" and "Peace" and "Peace".

and "Peace" and "Rest."

And the figure stooped and gathered to his breast the little frozen boy, and suddenly a soft delicious glow ran through his numbed veins. And Jerry let his tired head fall gently back against that tender bosom.

And heavier and heavier grew the weary limbs, and then suddenly, oh, so light! and presently he felt himself lifted up—

ever upwards-and carried away-away.

And never more did little Jerry know cold or hunger or fear or despair, and never again did darkness trouble him, for

"There shall be no night there."

AWAKENED.

You touched the harp of my life, and the music is echoing still, Swift to your summons electric answered the tensionless strings, Swift leapt each trembling chord at the power of your magic will, Swift soared each glad vibration on Love's untiring wings.

And the melodies linger yet in the fevered and stormy air,

I hear them, clear as of old, through the rush and whirl of the
days,

I hear—and my pulses thrill with a voiceless, yearning prayer, And the stream of my thoughts flows back down the old sweet haunted ways.

Deep in my soul's hidden mirrors your features reflected shine;
Flooding the darkness around with their glorious living light,
Centre and source of delight, whence shoot through these veins of
mine,
Rays that like lava burn and like heaven are infinite.

By that touch, by that waking murmur, you have changed the world for me,

Bathed all its manifold beauties in one bright, living glow,
Blended all earthly sounds in one vast harmony,

Through which love's wordless pæans in tremulous minors flow.

The ring of your laughter lingers in the night-wind's fitful sighs,
The spell of your presence hovers by the moonbeams' silver bars;
Between me and the starlight I see your eyes arise
Resplendent in the azure, like nearer, tenderer stars.

Will it be so for ever? When this joyous heart is cold,
When I pass to that Elysium that no mortal feet have trod,
Shall I still look back in longing, still be by your will controlled?
Will you in that mystic dawning stand between my soul and
God?

MARIE CONNOR.

FISHING IN NORWAY.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "KILLED IN THE OPEN," "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT,"
"STRAIGHT AS A DIE," ETC., ETC.

SPORTSMEN now-a-days have to go far afield in order to pursue their favourite amusements. The highlands of Scotland have long since been overcrowded. Ireland and Wales share a similar fate, and as population increases, year by year it becomes more and more evident that fresh pleasure-grounds must be sought. Even Iceland and Canada are not considered too remote by ardent anglers; but, perhaps, the most frequented country of

any is Norway.

Some ten or fifteen years ago it was comparatively a little-visited land. Now, thanks to the improved communication, it threatens to become over-run by tourists out for their annual holiday; whilst almost without exception, every river of any size or importance is in the hands of Englishmen. Those who came first were lucky enough to secure them at moderate rentals and on long leases. The Norwegian farmer looks down with contempt on the precarious pastime of fly-fishing, and when he wants a salmon, prefers to resort to his trap—a series of wooden piles, box-like in shape, driven into the river bed, and with an ingress wide at one end, narrow at the other, which effectually prevents the fish from regaining his liberty, once he has floated in with the stream. But now all this is changed, and in the present day enormous prices are asked and given.

A short while ago a river in the south of Norway let for no less than nine hundred pounds! By this it may be seen that we have not been long in teaching the simple native how to open his mouth. Yet for those who love sport in the real sense of the word, and who if they cannot afford to pay for the very best are content to take what they can get, there still remain many places, more especially in the distant and less known fjords,

where excellent fun may be obtained.

Let me try and conjure up a scene familiar to every Norwegian fisherman.

Picture to yourself then a narrow valley hemmed in by towering mountains some three or four thousand feet high. On them the

white snow rests summer and winter, enwrapping their lofty peaks with an icy mantle. Bare, precipitous cliffs, down whose scarred and weather-beaten sides foam countless milky waterfalls, that fill the air with a sound of rushing waters. Little wooden houses scattered here and there, painted red, white and yellow, and looking infinitely small as they nestle at the base of the leviathan hills. Miniature fields of rye, wheat and barley, about a quarter of an acre in extent. Enormous boulders lying about in every direction, some so newly fallen that they have left a white scar on the barren bluffs over-head. Grass, emerald green in hue, wild flowers in profusion, harebells, buttercups, heartsease, marsh mallow. Birch trees with their rounded leaves trembling in the morning breeze and their silver bark peeling to the sun. The glass-like fjord that reflects every object with the fidelity of a mirror and reproduces clouds, mountains, snow, with marvellous lucidity. And lastly, but by no means least, the wondrously transparent blue-green river rushing from stream to rapid, and from rapid to deep, slumbrous pool, until it loses itself gradually in the advancing tide-way. All these things are the background and accompaniments to your sport.

And now, making still further calls upon your imagination, we ask you with your mind's eye to perceive the chequered sky overhead, darkened here and there with grey clouds that yet leave the outlines of the mountains clear, and to feel that gentle breeze, exactly from the right quarter, which makes our hopes run high. Deliberately and tenderly we pore over our fly-book, and finally select that king of flies, a "Jock Scott," or as our Norwegian gillie pronounces it, a "Yock Scott." It is one of our own making, and like the chemist and bootmaker at home, we are convinced of its superiority, and that it is an article highly to be recommended. The rod is put up, the reel adjusted, the casting line well

moistened and tested.

At last, everything is in readiness and we start up the valley. If it were any but a fishing morning, we should employ our time in writing panegyries of the route, but our zeal is too great to dwell upon scenery when there may be a "Stor Lax" (big salmon) in prospect. In course of time we arrive at a beautiful-looking pool and are told by our attendant to commence the

business of the day.

This we gladly do, after first glancing upwards and downwards. To the right, the river comes foaming along over some large boulders, that check its impetuous course and cause it to break into a thousand little white-crested waves. Then it expands and widens, till the rippling water, growing quieter and quieter, subsides into a beautiful lazy swirl, which, forming one smooth dark sheet, rolls with swift, graceful, gliding motion over a ledge of jutting rocks some three feet high, and then dashes into snow-white spray as it rushes past every kind of stony obstruction.

Near the bank is a deep and sluggish back-water. Even a tyro cannot fail to see that this is a spot where salmon are bound to

congregate.

We begin casting at a point where the current runs fast and gradually work our way down stream. Ten minutes elapse, full of eager expectancy. Alas! no result. We fish carefully, patiently, even artistically. We cannot help being conscious of our own merits as an angler, but great as they undoubtedly are, our powers of persuasion are evidently not sufficient.

Then—merciful Heavens! At the very end of a cast, when we have given up hope and are just wondering whether we can throw a few yards of extra line, there comes a tug. Oh! ever welcome

tug.

Up goes the point of our rod in a jiffy. For all we know, it may be a forty pounder. The reel runs out with a click, but not as far as we could wish to see it, neither is there that pleasant sensation of a dead weight on the arms which betokens the capture

of a big fish.

Still, whatever he may be, he is a lively fellow and keeps dashing about for fully five minutes before we gain a glimpse of him. But already he is getting feebler and his resistance grows less. We wind up steadily, and lo! right out of the water there jumps a splendid sea-trout, weighing at least seven or eight pounds. Down, down with the point of the rod, and whirr, he is off again. Nevertheless, it is a last despairing effort. Good sport as seatrout give, they cannot fight like salmon, and the first rush is generally the best. He comes up splashing and for a moment threatens to break the line with his tail, but before long, turns on his side, with fins outstretched and red gills heaving tremulously. Now is Sivert's opportunity. He darts forward, plunges into the water like a Newfoundland dog, and with unerring eye and aim, thrusts the sharp point of the gaff through his silvery sides. next moment he is wriggling on the grass, a thin stream of blood disfiguring his shining body.

He has taken the fly well and greedily. It has to be cut out with a strong knife from the voracious cavern of his throat. We fix the hook of our weighing-machine in his gristly under-jaw and proceed to weigh him. The notch stops at seven pounds and three-quarters—not so bad for a beginning. Our spirits rise and

we are eager to be at it again.

A short pause, during which the fly is washed and cleaned and a knot undone in the casting line, and then we recommence our labours. But now, fully half-an-hour goes by. One might think there was not a single fish in the river—at all events we do not see the sign of one. The glow of exultation produced by the successful capture of our sea-trout evaporates.

First we say to ourselves, "It is high time to have another rise." Five minutes later, with an impatient sigh, "I wish to

goodness I could have another rise!" Finally, in despair, "I

don't believe I ever shall have another rise."

This pretty well represents the different stages of feeling one goes through. By this time the pool is almost fished out; there are but some half-dozen casts left, and you determine that they, at any rate, shall be faultless. You concentrate every energy, and have the gratification of seeing the fly land with exquisite lightness on the very spot you intended, and of feeling it work-

ing thoroughly well.

But all your fine casting is of no use whatever. It only aggravates the situation, and something must have come to the fish, for they are deadly sulky. The atmospheric conditions have surely changed since you commenced angling. But then, what man knows the exact atmospheric conditions approved of by the piscatorial tribe? You have eaught them in rain, caught them in wind, caught them in sunshine, and on the most likely-looking days come home without a rise. If ever philosophy were required, it is needed now. But philosophy has an ugly knack of breaking down when called upon in earnest. It is a thing easier preached than practised. Thus you muse disconsolately.

Ha! what's that? A troutlet gently sucking in the fly under water? An electric thrill runs through your frame. No, by Jove! It is borne deeper and deeper with a slow but steady persistence. A breathless moment succeeds; cautiously you tauten your line. At the first symptom of resistance, off goes the fish. There is not the least doubt about it this time—the Fates have favoured you and you are into a salmon. Your pulses throb and

the beatings of your heart grow louder and louder.

Eighty yards and more spin off your reel with lightning-like rapidity before he comes to a halt. He is endeavouring to leave the pool, and is making for the fall beyond. You begin winding up with desperate haste, and put all the pressure on him that you dare, for if he gains his point he will break you to a certainty, and to lose him now would be a disappointment almost more cruel than you could bear. How heavy he feels! What a strain he places upon your arms and tackle. Thank goodness the latter is the very best that can be bought for money—good treble-twisted gut.

You succeed in reeling in about half your line. He yields it sullenly and ungraciously; then, irritated by the tension, he is off again with a mad rush. But the suspense is no longer the same. He has changed his tactics, and now tries to head up-stream. You follow as fast as you can, grasping your rod with nervous strength, now bruising your shins against some sharp boulder, anon receiving a smart slap in the face from the overhanging boughs that check your passage, again losing your foothold and splashing knee-deep into the ice-cold water. No matter; you are far too excited to heed mere physical sensations. Every thought is concentrated on the fish, who is maintaining so gallant

a struggle, for you have not mastered him yet. He still forces you to play a waiting game, and every few minutes increase the chance of losing him through some unpropitious circumstance. Until he is on the bank, gasping out his life, you cannot hold him safe.

He now proceeds to give a series of horrible short, jerky digs, each one of which fills you with alarm, for fear he should regain his freedom. These are agonizing moments, for you can do nothing to prevent them. After this he sulks until your arms and back ache and the perspiration runs down your brow. What pluck he has; what spirit and what strength! Will he never give in? If this continues, you will be tired the first of the two. Another long ten minutes go by before slowly, very slowly, he turns on his side, and his broad glistening form lies for a moment revealed to vision in all its scaly beauty.

"Sivert, Sivert," we call out in accents of delight, "he's

a twenty pounder, if he's an ounce."

"Yes," comes the more sober reply. "He more dan dat; he two, tree-and-twenty poun'. God fish—very god fish."

But we have not got him yet.

Sivert makes a lunge with the gaff and misses him. He is in a bit too much of a hurry. The provocation to swear is something enormous. Out goes the line, and the game begins all over again. Fortunately, the prize is getting spent. Craftily and carefully we moor him in to the bank, calling anxiously to our attendant, "Vaer ikke i en hast!" Literally translated, "Do not be in a haste!"

This time Sivert makes no mistake. In another second, he has the cold steel through and through the salmon's lithe body,

and, with an upward heave, hauls him out of the water.

What a noble fellow he is to be sure! Silvery as one of his own native "fos" (water-falls), and clean run up from the sea. As we fling ourselves on the grass by his side, we feel as if we could gaze at him for ever. Four-and-twenty pounds he weighs, all but a couple of ounces. No wonder our sinews were strained during the contest. And now, the sun shoots out suddenly and fiercely from the misty clouds, causing them to roll asunder, whilst a canopy of radiant azure takes their place. The light on the water grows intense. It renders every pebble visible in the river-bed. Fatigued by our recent exertions, we seek a sheltered nook under a quivering birch-tree, and there-with the sound of many waters murmuring a soothing lullaby in our ears, and mixing with the drone of insects, the humming of bees and the distant tinkling of sheep bells—we bring forth our modest luncheon, which we eat with good appetite and contented spirit, and say good-bye to you for the present.

AT A MONTH'S END.

LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF A MAN OF THE TIME.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

By BERTHA THOMAS,

AUTHOR OF "THE VIOLIN PLAYER," "PROUD MAISIE," ETC., ETC.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

ARTCOMBE, Devon, June 19, 1880.

D "For Sale—part of the library of the late Dr. Lister, comprising many scarce works, valuable editions, &c. Apply by

letter to Captain Lister, Conington Court."

Two days ago the above notice caught my eye in the corner of the local paper. Though I have put off "Lanerton Lee" the author whilst rusticating in this remote nook, the book-fancier's mania still has hold of Hubert Lane the private individual. Every book-fancier has heard of Dr. Lister's library, and heard that of it which induced me to write to Captain Lister at once. I received a courteous reply, inviting me to come over this morning and inspect the books at leisure. "Be so good," thus ran the P.S., "as not to speak openly here of the sale."

From Dartcombe to Conington was a measureless drive, through the beautiful monotony of South Devon. Miles upon miles of steep narrow lanes, with high untrimmed hedges, full of dogwood and spindle berries, ivy-mantled elms and sycamores behind, and then field upon field to infinity, but never a human habitation. Quite suddenly Conington village cropped out—a dozen cottages and a toy church, scattered in a hollow, looking as though they had been dropped there by accident and forgotten. Conington Court, a strikingly picturesque stone-gabled building, faced me, standing at a stone's throw from the road, across a strip of lawn planted with shrubs and fenced off by a light iron railing. The driver stopped before a wicket gate. I walked up, admiring the singular, irregular frontage, the broken line of buttressed walls, fantastic variety in the shape of the windows, the ivy-grown turrets, with embattled parapet, and

machicolations over a large bricked-up archway, pierced by a small door, in old Gothic fashion.

I rang, and the door swung open. Stepping inside, I stopped

short, taken aback-at a jarring surprise.

For I stood in a ruin. The fine stone front is a mere screen for the remains of what was once a castellated mansion. But the screen is so well preserved as in no degree to prepare you for the dilapidation that lies behind it. Skeleton walls, fallen, halfburied arches, roofless chambers, crumbling turrets overlaid with a century of ivy-growth. Such is Conington Court.

An old crone, who is lodged in some habitable corner of the place, which she shows to sight-seers, hobbled forward, key in

hand, curtseying.

"Captain Lister," said I, mystified, "where does he live?" She pointed to a plain stuccoed dwelling-house I had overlooked,

visible through the trees behind the ruin, and explained.

Conington Court, an old family possession of the Listers, has for half a century been as I saw it to-day, abandoned to owls and bats and stray tourists. The villa adjacent, formerly the bailiff's house, has been let to Captain Lister for the last fifteen years by the head of the family, his cousin. She piloted me through the ruins to a gate in an old wall communicating with the villa garden. I had turned for another look at the picturesque scene. High aloft, through the loop-hole of a turret, fluttered something white. The housekeeper followed my glance.

"That will be one of the young ladies," she said.

"Young ladies here?" I asked, with mixed feelings. I had bargained only for old books.

"Five Miss Listers and Miss Ella," was her disconcerting

reply.

The plain-looking villa proved the picture of lavish comfort and elegance within. Captain and Mrs. Lister received me with frank hospitality, and in ten minutes we were on easy terms. He is one of those affable, gentlemanly beings whom you get to know wonderfully well in half-an-hour, and wonderfully little better though you know them for years. The way was agreeably smoothed for my errand.

He told me how long years ago his great-uncle's library had come into his—professedly unworthy—hands. He knows little about books—cares less, and "circumstances," as he puts it, now make of the sale a pressing necessity. His sweet, sympathetic-looking wife is clearly not the presence in which secrecy is

enjoined.

I found the famous library in a deplorable state of disorder and neglect. A glance showed me that examination here would take time. The captain courteously left me by-and-by to pursue my researches alone. It was as well. I was brimming over with indignation at what I saw. Trash and treasures jumbled indis-

criminately together. Great Heaven, what sacrilege! Old Ollendorff grammars, nursery rhyme books, cheap issues of modern novels (including two or three of my own), side by side with original editions of "Paradise Lost," of "The Faerie Queene," of Gower and Chaucer, rare manuscripts and Elzevirs. Here and there the covers, detached, had got mixed, and I found "Piers Plowman's Vision" encasing an old "Quarterly Review," and a Caxton-printed "Confessio Amantis" within the binding of my last-published romance! In this maze I had got no further than the conviction that my host has here a more valuable possession than he is aware of, when I was summoned to lunch.

Captain and Mrs. Lister are such a young-looking couple that the sight of their eight children, two of them grown up, impressed me with surprise. Not otherwise profoundly. The Miss Listers are like blurred and unflattering replicas of their mother—a pretty person. They are irreverently nicknamed by their young brothers,

"Elizabeth, Elspeth, Bet, Betsy, and Bess!"

"Is there a ninth olive branch?" I wondered, as we seemed to be waiting for somebody.

"Where's Ella?" inquired the captain. A chorus responded:

"Up in the turret. She's been there all the morning."
"Call her, Jack," said his father to the eldest boy.

"She don't like to be disturbed when she's reading up there," Jack objected stoutly, and effectually, for a pause ensued.

"You go, mamma," suggested a Miss Lister; "she won't mind

you."

The French windows were open. Mrs. Lister stepped out on the lawn and called "Ella!" The white thing up aloft fluttered, a tall young lady rose abruptly, walked along the top of the wall with surprising steadiness of nerve, and came to join the party. "Miss Lister, my niece," said the captain, introducing us. She bowed with a silent impatience of manner, as if I somehow were to

blame for her unpunctuality.

"Miss Lister, my niece," must be a handsome girl when she is in a good temper. That was not to-day. Still, not to select her for notice among her cousins would be impossible. Like an antelope in a herd of kine, a tiger-lily in a buttercup field, she stands out from the rest. She has the stock-in-trade of a professional beauty, and a patent contempt for it. Richly shaded tints of golden brown blend in her abundant hair; her bright dark blue eyes, splendid eyebrows, milk-and-red complexion, full, curled, clearly moulded lips, would strike notice even in a London ball-room. Even, indeed! Such a wealth of natural, healthful colouring bears no transplantation from the country. And yet, plain and ill-dressed though "Elizabeth, Elspeth," and sisters are, there is more of instinctive feminine grace and gentle charm about the plainest of them than in their handsome cousin. At least their countenances are agreeable. Hers plainly bespeaks a

pride, perhaps becoming in some Muscovite mistress of a thousand souls, but misplaced in Miss Ella Lister, the impecunious ward of a ruined ex-captain in the army—too proud to be vain of her

beauty, or to care to appear to advantage.

Mistress of Conington Court and the souls that are therein she undoubtedly is, and by common consent. This I learnt during lunch. They cannot so much as order the carriage or alter the dinner hour without referring to her. She is an interesting study of the natural tyranny exercised by a strong will and superior practical ability. Her remarks show her to be sensible and acute, but impatient of the slower intelligence and vacillation of those she lives with. They seem delighted for her to save them the trouble and responsibility of making up their minds.

After lunch I was reinstalled in the library. The window was imperceptibly ajar, and presently, from the lawn beneath, the low and imperious voice of "Miss Lister, my niece," caught my ear.

"Jack!"

"Well, Ella?"
"Who is he?"

"Some fellow who wants to have a look at the library."

"Uncle allows it?"

"Rather! He's been rummaging there hours already."

"Uncle is much too careless about letting in strangers. Anybody has only to ask, like this Mr. Lane—he knows nothing about him—who he is."

"How should he?" asked Jack obtusely.

"He leaves them alone—keeps no watch. I believe some of the books are very valuable; a dishonest dealer or collector why, a common swindler—might get in, passing himself off for a gentleman."

"Oh, gemini, what a lark! Walk off with his pockets stuffed!"
A good joke, the idea, in Jack's opinion. Not so for Miss Ella.

"I shall tell uncle what I think—that is, if he doesn't wish to

have his books tampered with-perhaps stolen."

"Insolent little puss!" thought I, half incensed, half amused, as the voices were lost in the distance. I was soon re-absorbed in my researches; every ten minutes I came upon some fresh "find," perdu in a litter of tattered rubbish. I was hard at work when at five the captain came in to report progress. My day's work, I confessed, had shown me, in the first place, that a proper investigation, with the sifting it involved, would occupy a week at least. He caught at my hints concerning the value of the collection with an eagerness that surprised me. Pressed for my estimate, I named two thousand pounds as a rough guess, rather under than over the market worth of his possession.

"Two thousand!" he repeated, with sudden, undisguised elation.

"Are you serious, Mr. Lane?"

I named two London firms, either of which, I could vouch, would

readily bid that amount. The news brought an absolute gaiety into his countenance. He saw what I was thinking, and

rejoined:

"Ah, you don't understand, Mr. Lane, how that sum could be of vital consequence to a person in my position. You take me for a rich man. Well, really, now and then, when I look round me, I can hardly persuade myself I am not."

"Then my mistake, if such it were," I answered, "was

natural, inevitable, in a stranger."

"Perfectly!" He drew a long breath. "Mr. Lane, I am deeply indebted to you. But for your timely hint I should have let the collection go for a song to a rascally country dealer, who presumed on my ignorance to try and cheat me out of fifteen hundred pounds. How can I repay you?"

"Easily!"—the opportunity was irresistible. He looked up,

and I told him:

"By allowing me to complete my inspection and purchase some £200 or £300 worth for myself, at a fair valuation, before the whole goes into the market. I shall esteem it a favour."

He caught at the idea, and invited me most hospitably to be their guest for the next week; he pressed me to accept, saying

frankly:

"It will be a favour to us; a visitor to enliven our solitude is a veritable godsend out here in the desert. Why, after all, one should dread the prospect of leaving such a hermitage I really don't know. Our children must gain by the exchange."

"You are leaving Conington?" I inquired. He hesitated. The confidence had slipped out unawares. But Lister is the very man to confide his dead secrets to any stranger who may happen

to take his fancy.

"I am a ruined man," he said meditatively, "and have been

for three years."

I should have felt concern had he shown any. Nothing seems to impress him very deeply, which is, perhaps, why he looks so little the worse for wear. Over a cigar he let me into further particulars, and an hour later I left with a pretty perfect knowledge of the private affairs of the gentleman who is to be my host for the coming week. His parting remark was a gentle reminder:

"You are coming to make notes in the library, remember. My wife knows all, but the children, so far, nothing whatever."

Captain Lister's position is just that of old Conington Court. He has continued to present the same flourishing exterior to the world, but the shell is hollow. For years he has kept up the same old high standard of hospitality, elegance, luxury, charity, with less and less means to sustain it—living more and more above his income, borrowing at ruinous rates of interest, kept afloat by doles from relations, till a last luckless speculation brought things to direful extremity. A cousin, appealed to for pecuniary aid, had

offered to extricate the captain, but, knowing his man, on condition that the bankrupt and his family should emigrate. A good appointment in New Zealand was promised to Captain Lister, who is anxious to go—easier there to start his household life again on a footing of economy than here, where his reputation and habits, put together with his disposition, made the thing next to

impossible.

But one debt, unowned to, fatally clogged his steps. His orphan niece Ella's little fortune of some £2,000, left in his trust, had, through no fault of his own, as he assured me, but the rascality of a financing agent, got involved in his losing speculations. She was now just of age, and he dreaded precipitating inquiry and exposure. The discovery that the proceeds of the library would enable him to pay what was due to his ward without

asking for delay was a real weight off his mind.

His folly has been unpardonable, but he seems so amiably unconscious of deserving blame that you forget it yourself in talking to him. His unreserve to myself, a stranger, whilst keeping his own family in the dark, is characteristic. I have promised to put him in communication with a firm of booksellers who will treat him liberally, and in return he is liberal of his courtesies. The week I am to spend with him will not be too long for the task I have set myself of reducing the treasure heap to the semblance of order, and making a rough list of the plums in the collection.

Conington Court, June 20 .- On arriving here this morning, with bag and baggage, I saw signs that a family breeze had intervened. Miss Ella, no doubt, has protested against my intrusion, and her uncle, contrary to custom, has neither yielded nor given She is too pretty for the rudeness of her manner to his reasons. repel you merely, yet no prettiness can condone it. Her sentiments are undisguised. She ignores me, in look and speech. I see: I am an impudent interloper-here against her will and injunctions. The five Miss Listers are kindness itself—bring me tea, press me to come and play lawn tennis for a change, pilot me over the grounds and the ruins. Like their parents, they fraternize easily with chance acquaintance. Miss Ella sat up in the turret and read. I was but moderately flattered to discover that her companion was "Charmian," my first romance. For though unquestionably the most popular, it is the one of my novels least esteemed by myself; and admiration, from certain quarters, rather irritates than gratifies you. But hers suggested a playful experiment in revenge. The second volume I had seen on a shelf in the library. I removed it thence to the unlikeliest drawer.

Late in the afternoon, enters Jack, commissioned to fetch it. He returns empty-handed and gets rated for stupidity. At length the young lady comes in person, with evident reluctance.

Seated at the writing-table, I neither looked round nor offered my help as she searched one dusty shelf after another. When I thought she had hunted long enough to expiate her previous incivility, I relented, turned, and was going to speak, but she anticipated me, saying with a frank, childlike courtesy of tone that routed previous conceptions:

"Have you by chance seen the second volume of this?" up-

holding Part I.

"Somewhere, I think," said I, pretending to look, and pulling open three wrong drawers first, then the right one. "It is difficult," I added severely, as I handed her the book, "to find anything in this chaos—the priceless treasures collected with infinite pains by Dr. Lister tossed and tumbled together with modern rubbish!"

"You like the old ones best?" she said, with lofty disdain; much as if I had expressed an eccentric preference for very old

hats or gloves.

"I am afraid so," I said with mock humility. "I like them

extremely."

"So did Dr. Lister, but he never touched one, except to dust it."

"Cannot you understand the reverence it is possible for these white vellum-bound volumes to inspire? the horror all book lovers must experience on seeing them profanely thumbed or jostled?"

"I suppose even old books were made to be read, not kept

under a glass case, like stuffed birds."

"It is certain few modern works will live long enough to merit such respectful treatment," said I, with as meaning a glance at "Charmian" as I could throw—to signify "that trash for instance."

"This?" she caught me up quickly. "What have you to say

against it?"

"Nothing," I replied with polite irony, "if it has the honour

to please you."

"You have an opinion, I suppose," impatiently. "Do you find it dull?"

"I find it unreal," I said. "The chief character—the chief incident——"

"Uncommon," she interrupted me; "but that is another thing. Would you call the oleander hawk-moth Jack caught yesterday in the garden yesterday unreal because it has never been taken in England more than once or twice?"

"Practically so, since to all but a very few such a capture is an unfamiliar or unknown experience. Better keep to your cabbage

butterflies and gamma moths—to homely reality——"

"To what is commonplace, third-rate, insignificant," she put in. "And above all," I concluded, "beware of 'high-falutin'; dreams leading you to despise what lies within your reach."

"And why not, if it is despicable?"

"Its worth depends upon how you turn it to account."

"No, on the height of your standard. Should people be con-

tented with what is mean and trite?"

"They should accept from the outset the very narrow limits within which—with the rarest exceptions—their lots lie. Books"—with another look at "Charmian"—"that put people out of conceit with their actual life and possibilities have a great deal to answer for."

"It has nothing to answer for," she said proudly, accepting the application to herself. "If it is a crime to desire the best, and to care for that only, even though ——" She stopped short suddenly, aware that I was watching her with some amusement, and that she had allowed herself to be drawn out, carried away by the

heat of the argument. Brusquely she left the room.

At dinner I made a third, with Captain and Mrs. Lister. The young people had tea, and only the eldest girl appeared in the drawing-room after dinner. The rest were out of doors: Mrs. Lister made their excuses—it was such a fine night, and then a nightingale—a phenomenon in Devonshire—was reported to have been heard singing yesterday in the ruins, where the eight truants were now disporting themselves.

"The old place looks wonderfully well by moonlight," remarked the captain. "I am a sad Philistine myself where the picturesque is concerned, and am subject to rheumatism besides. But

if you are not afraid of damp-"

"And care for the nightingales," suggested his daughter.

I am not musical, but accepted the nightingales.

The summer night was magnificent indeed. Three brilliant planets shone out in a rare conjunction, to which I directed my companion's attention. She guided me across the garden to the gate communicating with the ruins. A fair, pale, slender girl, who—like Conington Court—looked wonderfully well by moonlight; and with just that insinuating gentleness of demeanour that launches you on the track of mild flirtation.

"Wait," she whispered, as we stood inside the enclosure, under the sycamore's shade, with the grey tottering ivy-wreathed walls

facing us in the gloom.

Her name, though I must have heard it, I could not, cannot now, recall. She stood with her hand resting lightly within my arm. Was it the romantic background that compelled me to act up to it? There was a certain sentimentality in the situation—the moonlight creeping round the ruins, casting mysterious shadows, the fallen house, the falling family. Every art-student of human nature is apt to encourage his personal susceptibility to outward influences, though of the slightest.

"Hush," said Mary—I will call her so. I had not spoken. A faint chirp came from the thicket. "Hark," she whispered, and we

stood expectant of the ecstatic strain.

Instead, the loud hooting of an owl in the turret overhead startled us out of our reverie. The wildest, most mournful of all sounds of Nature. From the distant wood came the answering echo of its mate. The cry from the tower was repeated twice; then the bird from the wood flew over, hovered near, flapped its wings, and settled in the ivy overhead.

A human laugh greeted it there. A tall white figure rose up

on the turret—the scared bird fluttered away.

"It's Ella!" said my companion. "Oh, Ella, child, don't!"
The false owl had no wings, but winged feet, methought.
Standing erect on the ledge of a high unparapeted wall, she laughed again at her cousin's cry of terror, ran along to where a flight of shaky steps led down below, and joined her boy cousins

in another part of the ruin.

"How dangerous," I remarked.

"She likes to frighten us," sighed Mary, "but she never comes to harm."

The nightingale remained obstinately mute. We soon discovered that the grass was dripping, and went indoors to hot coffee. Presently Ella reappeared, looking wild and distant, but admirably handsome—her eyes glistening like jewels, her cheeks aglow. As a piece of furniture nothing can be finer. As Mary smilingly brought me a cup of coffee I chanced to look at her cousin. I caught a contemptuous glance——Upon my soul, such a one as a young Queen Eleanor might throw upon Rosamund and the King, first suspected of weakness in that quarter. A passing flash of light, betraying——well, after all, what is more natural? My young lady is sovereign at home, and claims to menopolize the consideration of women and the attentions of men.

A stranger, looking in on us this evening, would have seen a family circle as untroubled, as firmly established, on the face of it, as any in the land. Captain Lister, pleasant and débonnaire, as light-hearted as though he had five thousand a year coming in from the Funds—his wife, placidity in person; his children, untroubled by the least suspicion, as thoughtless for the moment

as their household pets, the kittens and canaries.

Conington Court, June 25.—Everything here is strange and contradictory; I have constantly to remind myself that things are the reverse of what they seem. Here is Captain Lister, nominally a well-to-do country squire, a pauper in point of fact, accounted a gentleman of honour, yet preserved by the narrowest chance from a shameful exposé; an old, happy, and seemingly stable home on the brink of a break-up. And a fireside queen whose kingdom may go to pieces any moment. A few days have placed me on familiar terms with everybody. As with a visitor to settlers on a desert island, formalities may be skipped. I take long walks with the young people, who introduce me to the country round. The place is extraordinarily lonely. Of the few neighbours some are

persons of eccentric habits and reputation, whom nobody visits, the remainder old-fashioned couples or maiden ladies—no enlivening company for the girls and boys at Conington Court. But they make company for each other. Their development has been as free and easy as that of the ivy on the ruins. Seclusion and license, the régime of all others to give the forces of a wilful

nature full play.

Ella has seen fit to unbend to me after all. The contrast of her lively, agreeable ways, when she desires to please, with her normal brusquerie and proud reserve is certainly piquant, an unstudied effect. She appears satisfied by this time that I am no picker or stealer, with nefarious designs on her uncle's library. The conversation, when we walk out, a party of five and six, is mostly between her and myself, and on general topics; her cousins prefer listening. She has evidently thought a great deal; her ideas are fresh and naïve, but she is absolutely impatient of contradiction, and even in the merest trifles repels as intolerable any sense of failure or defeat. She has the soul of a savage in the sheath of an English girl. The strangest compound of passion, intractability of impulse, with pride and an uncompromising temper of mind; interesting, but scarcely attractive, except as a study.

I am fated to hear a good deal of my other self. I have seen no reason for announcing what no one here suspects, the identity of Hubert Lane with "Lanerton Lee," whose works they hold in a most exaggerated esteem. That one's fame should have penetrated to Conington is gratifying to vanity, of course; but I have not come to Devonshire to be lionized, but to snatch a holiday from the doubtful pleasures of notoriety. Every day I might fear to read in the Western Morning News, alongside with a puff of "Hop Bitters," a sale of shorthorns, and last night's charity concert at Exeter, "Mr. Hubert Lane (Lanerton Lee) is at Dartcombe, collecting material for a new novel," if, indeed, plot and personages be not given. The signal for an amateur to call at the hotel with a manuscript I am expected to read, approve and get accepted for a magazine, or for an old lady to pounce on me for a subscription. My own name is luckily too common to tell tales. As for the Listers, they are not even aware that "Lanerton Lee" is a pseudonym. And really they have placed me on such a pinnacle in their imagination that I would rather not break the illusion by forcing the stubborn fact on their notice that "Lanerton Lee" eats, drinks, sleeps, and talks about the weather like any other poor mortal of their acquaintance.

Captain Lister is doing wrong in keeping the fact of his insolvency from his children. He believes, and has over-persuaded his wife, that it is kindest to spare them the blow as long as possible. The real truth is that he is afraid of his niece. Ashamed of himself, he dreads what she will say or think when she knows all. Lister is a wretched moral coward; still, when the cloud bursts, I pity him under the scathing comments, spoken or implied, of one member of his household. Her temperament and surroundings together have made of her a strange product. Her imagination has run riot, unchecked by the friction of experience; her strong will had its way till she feels its thwarting intolerable. Her over-exalted idea of what life has to give fore-dooms her to direful disappointment.

Dartcombe, June 30.—The murder is out, Lanerton Lee is unmasked; by mere accident the secret was told an hour or so

before I took leave.

This afternoon we met for tea out-of-doors, pic-nic fashion, among the ruins of old Conington Court. I joined the party late to-day, the last of my visit. On the very eve of concluding my researches I had come upon a pile of curious volumes and MSS. of value buried behind a mass of old newspapers in a cupboard, proving that my work was still incomplete. As I approached the tea-table I heard young voices, or rather Ella's young voice, holding forth to the rest. It ceased, and one of her cousins asked her:

"When you rebuild Conington Court, shall you take away the

ivy and leave none of those arches standing?"

"What do you mean? I shall pull down nothing I can help. Every bit shall be repaired that can be, and the parts wanting must be added, just as they were to begin with."

"And what shall you do with the villa?" asked Jack.

"I haven't decided," she said gravely. "It is ugly, but it would be hateful to destroy the place where one has always lived. Perhaps uncle will like to live on there. If not, you shall settle there with your wife."

Here I showed myself through an archway. Ella's colour rose, she was vexed, aware somehow she must have been overheard.

Said Miss Lister, who when a stranger's presence keeps her cousin in bounds rather enjoys teasing, "You find Ella at her old amusement of building castles in the air."

"Is it your favourite one?" I asked of the castle-builder.

"Of course," she said. "What else should I care for so much?"
"Well, I should pull down the villa," persisted Jack. "It's
like the Royal Yacht Hotel at Dartcombe, and will look awful if
Conington Court is restored."

"I shall not pull it down," said Ella definitely, "nor take away a stick or a stone, nor cut down a tree. I want to know the place

again as I remember it always."

"Poor girl!" I was thinking. Unlike her cousins, who inherit their parents' volatility, she has taken deep root in her surroundings—her fibres have grown into them—her affections and associations belong here alone. The shock for her will be severe. I thoroughly understood at that moment how her uncle should recoil from the ordeal before him. Afraid of and used to submit to her,

he feels their new relation will be a false one, and eminently

disagreeable on several counts.

Just then the man himself came hastening from the villa towards us with an animated, elated air and step, and holding an open letter in his hand. What was the pleasant news? What could the post have brought him except duns? He marched straight up to me and shook hands with me demonstratively, saying:

"Mr. Lane, my wife and I have had a great surprise. We had no idea, no suspicion—how could we? It was hardly fair of you to keep us in the dark; still, I suppose it was our fault not to

guess."

At a glance I had recognized the writing of the letter he had been reading as that of an acquaintance, a common acquaintance

it turned out, and there was an end of my incognito.

"Children," began the captain to his flock, seriously—ludicrously so to the subject of his harangue; "what would you think if I were to introduce you to a friend—I may say a literary idol in this household—whom we supposed ourselves to know only through his works, as all the world knows him, Lanerton Lee, but whom it has been our privilege to know as Mr. Hubert Lane?"

The silent awe of the young people, then the low, long-drawn "Oh!" of the younger girls, such as rises from a crowd when a rocket bursts and descends in a glittering shower, was something to remember. The Listers, clearly, still retain that superstitious reverence for print and literary fame that now lingers only in remote districts. The boys remained mum; the elder girls shy and diffident. I glanced at Ella with a slight curiosity to see how She was dumb and still and her countenance told she took it. no tales. Captain Lister re-engaged me in conversation, for learning of my just-made discovery in the library he pressed me to stay on to investigate it. That was impossible. For many weeks to come, as I told him, my time was not my own, but when he suggested I should return for a few days in September I closed with the invitation. He said jokingly he should keep the library locked in the interval and I might keep the key if I liked. At this point he was summoned away; the tea party meantime had dispersed. Only Ella had not stirred; her expression as I turned towards her was so strangely disturbed and so singular that I asked her what was the matter.

"Why did you not tell us who you were?" she asked rather

huskily.

"I see no compulsion to proclaim the fact of one's authorship, and every reason to refrain from the least appearance of blowing one's own trumpet. And in first forming acquaintance it is far better to be unsurrounded by a false halo of fame."

"False?" she repeated indignantly.

"No such fame, for good or ill, is absolutely true. A man's

writings, whatever their accounted worth, are no fair criterion of his own, and he may prefer that this should be judged on its own merits. For instance, one ought not to need brilliant literary credentials to show people competent to judge that one is neither a common swindler nor a dishonest dealer, nor even an unprincipled book collector."

She reddened deeply and averted her face.

"Let me assure you," I said with mock gravity, "that I have sacredly respected every leaf in your library. I don't speak of Dr. Lister's Caxtons and Elzevirs, which I engage have not been so reverently handled since his decease, but the Ollendorff grammars and almanacs and French exercise books. In winnowing the wheat from the chaff I have not so much as destroyed last year's 'Bradshaw.' Your uncle will have no cause to repent having generously taken me upon trust."

I stopped, repentant myself, for she was sobbing violently, as from mixed excitement and mortification. Before I could add a word she rose hurriedly and went away, still shaken from head to

foot with passionate, suppressed vexation.

It was like a child's shame. I had had no sort of wish to distress her by my teasing speech, still less to make her hate me, as she does now to a certainty. When after dinner I took my departure, she did not come with the others to wish me good-bye.

Poor child! A sad time for her is coming. It is cruel in her guardian to disguise it, and before leaving I presumed so far as to drop a plain hint to Captain Lister to that effect. He took it in good part. He is going to tell everybody everything without delay. When I return—some six or eight weeks hence—I shall find the whole household duly apprized of the facts carefully kept back hitherto. Considering that there is every prospect of their sailing for the Antipodes at Christmas, his resolution has come none too soon.

(To be continued.)

ON THE RIVER.

AN IDYL.

HE:

"SOFTLY down the stream, love, Gently as we float, Watch the water gleam, love;"

SHE:

"Don't upset the boat."

HE:

"See the leafy grove, love, Where fond lovers walk, Sweet 'twould be to rove, love."

SHE:

"Wish you'd pull, not talk."

HE:

"Mark that youth and maid, love, In their joy, how blessed, Babbling in the shade, love,"

SHE:

"Badly she is dressed."

HE:

"Far above the world, love, Let our spirits soar Where the clouds are furled, love."

SHE:

"Now, you've lost your oar!"

HE:

"Let our spirits soar, love, In mid-ether there; What can we wish more, love?"

SHE:

"If you'd cut your hair!"

HE:

"Grief we will forget, love;
Home and kin as well;
Now our hearts have met, love."

SHE:

"Heavens! What a smell!"

HE:

"Down love's winding way, love, Hand-in-hand we'll jog, Weather always May, love:"

SHE:

"Only a dead dog."

HE:

"And if overhead, love, Black storm-clouds should lower, Western skies are red, love;"

SHE:

"We've been just the hour."

HE:

"With you by my side, love, I am ever willing To meet Fate's dark tide, love."

SHE:

"Give the man the shilling."

ZERO.

THE TEST OF CLEVERNESS.

By FAYR MADOC,

AUTHOR OF "THEREBY," " MARGARET JERMINE," ETC., ETC.

WE all like to be thought clever. There is no one who would not be hurt—if not angry—at finding that he was considered stupid, and I take it that each one of us would prefer to be dubbed a knave than a fool—that is, if he admitted truth.

But what makes us clever? What is this much-desired, highly-vaunted, triumphant cleverness? What is its standard?

and by what criterion can we judge it?

There are many opinions respecting it. Some people think that the passing of examinations is the test of cleverness; others consider that to have written a book constitutes it; others again look upon brilliant conversation as its mark. I have heard a good linguist called clever; I have also heard a good letter-writer, a good pudding-maker, a good charade-actor, a good bird-tamer, a good stocking-darner even, described by the same delightful adjective. In short, there is no performance, from glove-mending and fire-laying to Act-of-Parliament-making and campaignplanning, the principal executors of which have not been called clever. It is a mistake, however, to call every one who makes a noise in the world clever. A great many persons whose names are well known are by no means clever, and a number of persons who live quietly in their secluded homes and are never heard of at all out of their immediate circles are clever in a marked degree.

The test of cleverness is neither power, nor originality, nor knowledge, nor intellect. It is adaptability. The clever person is essentially the person who can conform to the natures and needs of others and to the circumstances of his life. A man may be a great scholar, he may have acquired vast stores of learning, he may have formulated philosophies, and his logical powers may be incontestable, and yet if he cannot adapt himself to his surroundings, if he treads on every one's toes and always says and does the inappropriate thing, he is not clever. Whereas a man who knows very little, who has perhaps only a smattering of the 'ologies and a vague knowledge of the principal events of history, is distinctly clever, if he can be all things to all men and if he

always knows what to say and do.

I have often heard it said, "So-and-so is so clever, it is such a pity he or she makes so many social mistakes." But there lies the misconception. If So-and-so makes mistakes, he or she is not clever. He may be talented, possibly he is a genius. But it is certain that he is not clever, for cleverness never blunders. Genius may be misunderstood and talent may be unappreciated, for neither genius nor talent necessarily combine cleverness, and it is the combination which commands success. Chatterton was a genius, but he was not clever; he had no power of adaptation, and he died young and miserably. De Quincey possessed the rarest talents, but neither could he accommodate himself to his surroundings, and he was always in debt and perpetually lived in

lodgings.

But if genius and talent do not necessarily combine cleverness, they very frequently do so, and it is the clever man who has talent and the clever genius who rules the world. Perhaps the most striking instance of combination is to be found in Shakespeare. His superb genius—i.e., his absolute insight into human nature and his grasp of the possibilities of things—is indisputable; his talents for expression and construction are well manifested in every page of his works, and his cleverness—his power of adapting himself to the constant requirements of man—is evinced in every one of the characters he drew. Shakespeare's genius has undoubtedly given him immortality. But as undoubtedly his cleverness has added popularity to that undying fame. Other great writers have achieved an endless celebrity. The genius of Milton and of Dante, for instance, will never be forgotten; but Dante and Milton wrote for the few, and only the cultured can appreciate their lofty verse, while Shakespeare wrote for all, for the great and the small alike, for the sage and the unlearned, for old and young, for men and women.

I once read the conjecture, that had Shakespeare lived now he would have written novels, and that had George Eliot lived in the Elizabethan period she would have written plays. It is very likely. The genius of these two great people would always have been the same, and the cleverness of each naturally dictated the form in which they should crystallize their thoughts. Had Sir Thomas Malory's talents been superadded to a cleverness such as theirs, he would have written the stories of Arthur and Guenever, of Lancelot and Elaine, of Galahad and Percivale, in dramatic form, and instead of the "Morte d'Arthur" being almost a sealed book, its delightful contents would have been household words for evermore. But this gifted author did not see that it was useless to offer a book to a people who didn't read, and hence his work has been buried for centuries. Shakespeare and George Eliot were far too clever to make such a mistake. Notwithstanding their incomparable power, neither would have won the same renown had they not perceived what was the engine of their day.

For in Shakespeare's time only a few read and many went to the play, and at the present moment there are millions of readers

and only a few scores of theatre-goers.

There has been an outcry lately for new plays, and dissatisfaction has been expressed at the absence of playwrights amongst us. I think that this clamour evidences a great lack of cleverness in the clamourers. It is not the spirit which is wanting. There is abundance of dramatic fiction in the present day, and our libraries teem with books that are full of fine situations and sparkling dialogue. But the demand, as I have intimated above, comes now from the readers. Most of us look for our amusement now in the three-volume novel, not in the five-act comedy, and the few play-goers are satisfied with the old plays and prefer to see them over and over again. There is no demand for new plays. Who wants to see a new play when he is not tired of Shakespeare and Sheridan and Sheridan Knowles and Goldsmith? I think the audience is cleverer than the critics. But if the critics must suggest something, why should they not suggest that the pens which can make French subtilties fit for ears polite, might with as great facility do the same kind deed for the outspoken dramatic poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who, living in an age when Mudie and Smith were not born, and when there was a playhouse in every village, disburdened their souls in the only language which was likely to be heard of men. Vegetation cannot thrive upon an exhausted soil, and why do people expect that human wit should eternally produce the same literature? It is absurd to look for good plays from a reading nation. It is the novelist's day now, and for pity's sake let him have it! Who knows but that in a coming age, with our board schools and our College of Preceptors in its new home, and our multiplied schools and colleges and our competitive examinations, novels will be relegated to the lumber-room, and the demand will only be for science primers and text-books of literature?

But I have digressed.

Cleverness is admittedly distinct from talent and genius. But although cleverness can run very well without talent or genius, neither genius nor talent can run at all without cleverness. Cleverness brings these higher gifts to the front, and hence a confusion of terms has often arisen. Certainly the most talented people and the greatest geniuses are invariably clever also, but there are a great many talented people in the world who have never become distinguished for lack of cleverness. They have brilliant ideas, grand ideas, highly original ideas, or they can even execute well—they can paint a fine picture or compose a touching melody, or perhaps write a stately epic—but there their powers end. They cannot adapt themselves; and it is cleverness which seizes its opportunity, is seen and heard at the right moment, strikes the chord to which a response is certain, sees the corner it

can fill, is always ready and always compliant. For cleverness seeks to please and aims at popularity. Perhaps by itself it is not perfectly high-minded: it is apt to pander to the tastes of the hydra-headed monster; it flatters him, tries to catch his eye, acts up to him, answers his expectations. It never makes him feel foolish and ignorant and insignificant as talent often does. Talent by itself is generally antagonistic. It rather likes to make other people feel small; it seeks to push its own doctrines and make its own name great; it rings its dinner-bell whether people are hungry or not, and is angry if they don't attend; it despises the public and yet tries to lead it. The public resents all this; it snubs talent and calls it names and won't eat its dainties, and utterly refuses to be led by it. It is only when talent is accompanied by cleverness, which shows it when to be stern and when indulgent, and teaches it how far to be true to itself and how far to answer the popular cry, that it flourishes and makes itself known and esteemed. By itself it is sure to fail. And if talent suffers from the want of cleverness, still more does genius. Genius is generally too lofty for common appreciation, and if it be at the same time utterly uncompromising, the chances are that its glory will die with it and that it will leave no mark but the remembrance of its own personality. By his genius Alexander conquered half the world, and if he had been clever enough to organize a great system of administration the Alexandrian empire might have existed unto this day, and the whole history of the world might have been altered. But he was not clever, he never even sought to adapt his ways, and his empire crumbled away. There is nothing left of his conquests: only a great name standing still and lonely in the plains of the bygone ages. Genius, truly, can never remain hidden or unacknowledged, but the genius that wins love and gratitude must be firmly seated upon a basis of cleverness.

The reason that people who come to the front are called clever is that talented people who are not clever never do come to the front. But there are plenty of every-day people who are never near the front, but who are clever enough for all that. The wife who manages to live happily with a miserly or a crotchety or a jealous husband; the man who is loved by men and women alike, whose little successes are never envied and whose little disappointments are always pitied; the clergyman who has no aggrieved parishioner among his flock, and who is friends both with Father Clement and the Reverend Mr. Stiggins; the domestic servant who knows our ways exactly; the tradesman who gains and keeps our custom by his obliging manners and his dispatch; the bland schoolmaster whose house is always full—these are all truly clever persons, although they are merely the Toms, Dicks and Harrys of society. Be it thoroughly understood that cleverness has nothing to do with intellect. It is a

quality, like good temper or sweetness of voice or length of limb. Intellect is a gift, and though a gift is to be highly prized, a gift without a quality to float it is valueless. It is like a violinist without a fiddle: he might as well be a chimney-sweep. Indeed, there are plenty of intellectual persons who are far from clever. We all know the man—the clergyman whose sermons are so profound and eloquent, or the barrister who wins such forlorn hopes, or the moralist who has written such a magnificent treatise—who if he be left for five minutes to superintend the children's dinner, is sure to let Willie eat too much and allow Molly to knock over the carafe, and who infallibly splashes the gravy all over the cloth, and spills the grease on the carpet, and gives Baby a cherry with the stone in it. And we all know the intellectual woman, who reads everything and talks well upon it, and who perhaps writes and possibly lectures, but who can never square her accounts when she has been to the Army and Navy Stores with a five-pound note in her pocket, and who always gets into the wrong train, and is invariably interviewing some one when her husband comes home, and who lets the little girls sprawl on the floor and sew without thimbles, and suffers the little boys to bite their nails and forget to open the door for ladies. Oh, the pity of it! The intellectual man who misses cleverness is probably a bore, and certainly a failure; but the intellectual woman who is not clever is worse: she is a bore and a failure, and a scandal into the bargain.

The notes of cleverness are three: first, invariability; second,

practicalness; third, adaptability.

A clever person is always clever. That is, a clever sanitarian does not wear flannel for a winter or two and then discard it, does not attend to his diet on Monday and eat carelessly on Tuesday, does not see to his drains in June and suffer a bad odour in July; and a clever materfamilias does not manage Tom's temper and control Florie's flirtations at Christmas and allow her son and daughter to quarrel and flirt at Easter; and a clever cook does not serve the dinner well when covers are laid for twenty and send up uneatable viands when Sir John and her ladyship dine alone; and a clever tailor does not fit Lord Apollo à merveille and turn out poor Mr. Dump as if his clothes had been made for Captain Talent often lies dormant, and at all times requires a fit soil in which to flourish, and genius often only flashes forth once in a lifetime. But cleverness is always present (unless it should be temporarily obscured by illness), and a clever person will be clever at all ages, from first maturity to the end of his days. Certainly, I do not believe in clever children. In the nature of things, clever children are unlikely, for cleverness is a quality which implies self-dependence, and if one is to see an opportunity and seize it, one must not wait to ask mamma. Childhood can obey implicitly or it can imitate exactly. But it can hardly

take its own line. Like the teeth, cleverness does not develop at birth.

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And cleverness is practical.. It never offers us what we don't want, or tries to stuff us with meats we are not prepared for, but it keeps pace with the genius, and when a giant has made a great discovery it comes forward and utilizes it, to our joy and convenience. Genius invented the railway. But it was the cleverness of Bradshaw which gave us the Railway Guide for sixpence. The great manufacturers and merchants who supply us with biscuits and blacking and pills and hairwash and soap and everything else that the heart of man can possibly desire, are always some of the cleverest people of their day. Eminently practical, they enrich themselves by giving us satisfaction. They hear the first faint sigh for chocolate, or pickles, or mustard, or cod-liver oil, and lo! the article we languish for is in our hand. Certainly, there may come a day when the names of Pears and Epps, of Horrocks and Keiller, will be forgotten, whilst Descartes and Newton, Shelley and Keats will be remembered during all time. cleverness does not aspire to fame. It simply aims at making the best of things now and laying up a little store for its next of kin. Games will illustrate this note of cleverness. Thoroughly stupid people never play games at all, and gifted people who are not clever often play them badly. The reason of this is not far to seek. Games require that the player should have quick wits, that he should see and take instant advantage of every circumstance that occurs. In a slow and thoughtful game like chess, these spontaneous qualities are less needed; hence we often see chess played by persons who are intellectual alone. But such games as whist, cribbage, backgammon, cricket, tennis, essentially require cleverness to be well played. They call for quick perception and instantaneous action; they demand a correct and rapidlyformed judgment; they need at once both memory and foresight, due tension and swift performance combined. Genius may invent a game and talent may improve it-may think of new methods of bowling, of whist-signalling, of scoring; but it is the clever man who is the expert, who is the successful player and who is always on the winning side.

Also, and chiefly, cleverness is adaptable. It can fit itself into every corner, it can accommodate itself to every exigency. Herbert Spencer has defined life as "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." This being granted, cleverness becomes the soul of life, for it is continually adjusting itself to circumstances, and the more in harmony a man is with his circumstances the cleverer he is. Genius may make us mad with its preaching and may force us to walk about with peas in our shoes and scourge ourselves and burn all our story-books and make life into quite a desert of severe things; and talent may make us feel uncomfortable and tell us that everything we like is

Philistine, and that all our fancies are crude. But cleverness always goes with the stream and gives us what we like best and what we want. It never deals in incongruities or antagonisms; it is never the death's-head at the feast. It is always sympathetic—comes in skates at Christmas and in tennis shoes at midsummer; has a hushed voice for all our head aches and orange flowers for all our bridals.

"In the reproof of chance, Lies the true proof of men."

The cleverest is he who can use chance as a walking-stick—like Coleridge's raven, who

"Picked up the acorn and buried it straight,"

and came back and dwelt there when

"The acorn was grown to a tall oak tree."

Most of us don't see the acorn, and when we get old we grumble that we have no home in a tall oak tree. But it was our own fault; we buried something that the soil couldn't assimilate, and nothing came of it. It was sad enough in all faith. was also uncommonly stupid. There are thousands of chances in every man's life, and the clever men pounce upon them and turn them into substantial blessings. But the stupid men, however wise and learned they may be, don't see them, and leave them hanging behind the door, or tread them under foot or frighten them away rudely. You must be very gentle with your chance. A clever fellow has at it without a moment's hesitation, and secures it. But when he has it, he handles it as tenderly as if it were a rare butterfly. There was once a young man who was really very gifted and had all manner of scientific inventions at his fingers' ends, and all he wanted was money and influence to push them. So some one got him an introduction to a great man, and every one said poor Malapert's fortune was made. But it wasn't. For the great man, though he had the heart of an eagle and the mind of a god, chose to live in softly carpeted chambers, and liked low voices and much courtesy. And Malapert behaved so indecorously, tramping about like an elephant and shouting like a sea-dog in a storm, that the great man thought he was an impostor, and politely showed him out into the cold, and there he is still. He had his chance in his very hand, and he lost it through his want of tact. He is a wretched old man now, so poor that he eats, but never dines. Yet he might have set the Thames on fire if he had only been clever. And he might have been happy. For though genius and talent are often miserable and gloomy, cleverness is always happy, because it never blunders, never has anything to regret, never expects more than it gets.

It is a sublime thing to be a genius, and a fine thing to have gifts, but it is a blessed thing to be clever. For the clever man misses nothing, falls out with no one, enjoys life to the utmost, and probably because he is successful, is also good. And when one is good, we know——

But a truce to moralizing. I will tell you a story instead.

Once upon a time there was a poor widow, who was left with three sons. Now the eldest of the three was musical; he had so fine an ear that he could detect the quarter of half a demisemitone, and he could play so skilfully that when you set him down at an old piano which hadn't been opened for fifty years he brought such lovely music out of it that it seemed as if the wornout old instrument must be inspired. And the second could paint so exquisitely that it seemed as if his likenesses were twin brothers and sisters to the sitters, and many lords and ladies fell hopelessly in love with his Psyches and Endymions, mistaking them for living people. But the youngest could do nothing, and he had no artistic yearnings; he didn't faint at the sound of bag-pipes nor shudder at the sight of an inharmonious grouping of colours; and he liked swimming and riding and playing hare and hounds with other boys.

"Noddy is decidedly stupid," said the mother. "He has no talents whatever. Fortunately he is sweet-tempered and obliging, and in after years, no doubt, his brothers will see he doesn't want."

When the boys were old enough their mother sent them forth daily to earn their living, and sometimes the eldest and sometimes the second would come proudly back with his pockets full of golden guineas and relate how he had been to some fair or market, and how people had wept to hear his music, or had gone into ecstasies at the sight of his pictures. But these great days were only occasional; it is not every day of the week that one has time to listen to a sonata or sit for one's portrait. Noddy, however, never returned home with empty pockets. He seldom, it is true, brought back enormous sums. But his gatherings were regular, whereas those of his brothers were entirely fortuitous, and sometimes for weeks together these gifted youths made nothing, and it was then that Noddy's daily pence kept the pot boiling.

"How do you do it?" the elder brothers asked. "Such a duffer as you are, too!"

"Well, I am always on the spot," returned Noddy.

"What spot?" they inquired.

"The spot," said Noddy. "I can't tell you more than that. It's in a different place every hour of the day. You should never try to come ashore when the tide's running out, and you should always keep your eye on the weather-cock and remember which way the wind blows, and, above all, you ought to cut your coat according to your cloth."

"But how can one do that?" said the eldest brother. "I can't cut my coat and handle my bow at the same moment."

"And I can't keep my eye on the weather-cock when I'm

painting," added the other.

"Well, if you like to come with me, I daresay I could give you

a tip or two," Noddy would say.

So one day, when fortune had been adverse a specially long time, the eldest brother slunk out after breakfast, joined Noddy, and begged to be allowed to bear him company. And Noddy acquiesced, and, moreover, gave his brother the tip as he had promised, so that, lo and behold, the youth who had made nothing for weeks came home in the evening rich! The next day the second brother stole out after Noddy, and the same happy result awaited him. Indeed, it soon became apparent that whoever got Noddy's tip was successful.

"How is it?" the elder brother asked. "You're not clever, you know, Noddy, and yet you always seem to see into the middle

of next week."

"You see, I know when," rejoined Noddy cheerfully.

Whereat the elder brothers tried to pull their sprouting moustaches, and said, "That's it. It's a good thing the poor chap has something. When a man isn't clever, it's convenient if he can back the winner."

And they agreed between themselves that their youngest

brother had been born under a lucky star.

But a gentleman, who hated Wagner and never read anything but shilling dreadfuls, and laughed immoderately at "The Private Secretary," but who always saw as straight and far as if he had been the sun himself, took Noddy into his bank, and after a time Noddy rose to be a distinguished banker, and had a fine income, and lived in clover, and became a Cabinet Minister, and dictated Circular Notes to all the Great Powers. And his brothers were great artists, and they always had money in their pockets, and were loved and admired by the whole world. But Noddy continued to give them the tip, though no one knew that he pulled the strings.

"Noddy's a good fellow," the elder brothers would say as they grew old and grey. "He's not clever, of course; but he's had uncommon good luck, and it's a capital thing to have a brother who

always hits the right nail on the head."

A THAMES BACKWATER.

By ARTHUR T. PASK, AUTHOR OF "FROM LOCK TO LOCK," ETC.

LEAF from the willow branch overhead has just fallen on to my nose. If I had the wealth of Mr. Mackay, the "Silver King," or of the Maharajah What's-his-name, Holkar, I would give any one a thousand pounds to save me the trouble of lifting up my hand to brush that much-to-be-accursed leaf off. d'honneur (I hope this is a proper way to put it, and that I have spelt my French right), I have just sculled my light gig into a Thames backwater; I have taken up the stretchers, piled all the cushions into the stern, and am lying at or would be at my ease in the bottom of the boat, only that, well-that-that leaf. There! I have brushed it off, and am ready to make an affidavit, only I wouldn't be bored with anything of the sort, that I am five degrees hotter. Eh bien, I suppose I must make the best of it. One comfort is, I can enjoy my smoke without the trouble of having to take pipe or cigarette out of my mouth. I have got a nice little hookah, and stuck the bowl on the seat so that I can puff away as calmly as Peter von Sturveysant.

Being in a Thames backwater, which is, of course, being in one of the quietest, sweetest nooks in the world, perchance you think I am going to rush off into one of those dear old, ancient, crusted, well-seasoned quotations. I most certainly am not! I

am not going to say anything about-

Sub tegmine fagi ;
 Dolce far niente;

3. "Not o'erflowing full;"

4. Far from the madding crowd.

Why, the very effort of trying to remember anything is enough to put me in a fever. No! I shall half close my eyes and dose, with my hat o'er my nose, and think on my Rose; why, I am half asleep, and her name ain't—I mean isn't, I mean is not Rose, but Maude. And upon my soul it is rather difficult to keep awake, I can tell you. The painter is fastened to that bit of twisted root sticking out of the bank, and the end of the thick white cord is lapping in the water, and a water-beetle is doing Blondin on it; and he can, for what I care, for I'm not going to bore myself with stopping him. Hullo! there is a rustling in the

leaves—flop! splash! It's a water-rat! There he goes swimming across, leaving a bright waving glittering line in his wake. I remember years ago when I used to go for these water-rats in the trowlocks by Teddington Lock. I remember a boy, too, who once boasted that he had eaten a water-rat, and that he liked it.

We didn't much believe him though, for he had a way of prigging other boys' things out of their desks. However, I don't wish to be hard on his memory, poor dear lad! He didn't become a professional thief of the lower order, he became a sort of financial agent, amassed a large fortune, bought a large place in Loamshire, and lives there highly respected by everybody. I daresay if I met him he would ask me to dine with him. However, all the same I wish he hadn't stolen those leads off my night lines, when I was a little boy, to make counters like shillings, but it was a way he had. It was only the early dawning of financial genius. I often wondered whether Mrs. Watt ever spanked the youthful inventor of the steam engine when he was trying those experiments of his and "spileing" the kettle. Hang James Watt, I say! What do I want to bore

myself about him for?

How pretty that bit of bank looks through the branches of the Nigh by the somewhat draggle-tailed old foxglove there is a tiny patch of forget-me-not. What's that song about forgetme-not?" "By rippling brook, by purling stream." Oh! I know it's one of Ganz's. Let me see, once upon a time I used to know a girl that sang that. I used to sit on the lawn with her father while she sang indoors with the French windows open. It was at one of those Hampton Wick houses, with lawns down to the river. We used to sit and listen to the nightingale in the moonlight, or to the bargees swearing as they dropped down with the stream to the lock. I loved that girl. I own it-yes, I own But all the same she married a railway barrister—a sniggering, supercilious beast with mutton-chop whiskers. I saw her this year, perched on the top of a house-boat at Henley. had a tussore and blue serge half-yachting costume on. didn't become her, and she had grown hideously stout, and she was positively wolfing down her lunch. I hope it disagreed with her, and that she was out of temper next morning, and let the barrister beggar have it. I hate 'em both!

But what on earth do I want to bore myself about this sort of thing for? There's such a lot of wild geranium about here that the warm acid scent of the leaves is quite refreshing, and the blue robin's-eye is still in bloom; and even the buttercup has ventured to flower again. But I can hear the splash of sculls on the river, the other side of the island. Thank goodness no one has come in here; I like to have my backwater to myself. They are gone! That's something to be thankful for, anyhow. How still and quiet it all is. I fancy that I can almost hear the long-

legged fly skimming over the water. There is a distant buzzing at last, which comes nearer and nearer. A great dragon-fly has stopped short in mid-air, as if having a look at me. He evidently wants no further acquaintance, for he buzzes his way into the osiers and is lost altogether. But no, I can't be let alone. Here comes another visitor—a swan, for a change; I won't say a stately swan. What a comfortable time these beggars must have of it, these sinecurists of the Thames Conservancy. I throw a cork at him, and with a scuttle and a hissing that is meant, doubtless, for a waterfall of the most freely-adjectived bad language, he curves his neck, and with a malignant squint out of his dark eye is soon I look across the backwater to the meadow's bank. There, a great horse-chestnut mirrors its branches in the still water; there are a few scraps of paper lying about—a river picnic, of course. I can't help thinking of some of my river picnics—banjo playing, bad champagne, lobster salad and giggling. I wonder if I could enjoy cheese-cakes and sherry now, as I did, as Monsieur Béranger sings, "when I was twenty-one." Those cannibalistic feeds of Maids of Honour in old Richmond town! Sweet, sweet, pleasant, sticky memory, happy, happy dream!

But the sunlight now is mellowing and the shadows have lengthened. A water-wagtail is hopping on the bank. I always like water-wagtails, whether on the sea-shore or the river meadow. I suppose there are kingfishers to be seen somewhere or the other on the Thames even now, but I can't say that I ever met with one yet. The sunlight now streaming through the leaves of that horse-chestnut prints a rich golden lattice on the water. Splash! a dace has leapt out for a breath of evening air, turned a silvery summersault—I like that!—and fallen back again. I wonder if ever an otter made his way here; I hope not, nasty, restless, sniffing creatures. It is quieter than ever now; so quiet that I can hear the noise of the water-mill not so far away. The rhythmic splash of the water mingles with the feeble twitter of birds and the tinkle of the distant sheep-bell; I look above, for there is a stir in the leaves of the willow, and I can catch the slightest sound; a chaffinch is peeping down at me; he takes things as coolly as I do myself, and is not in the least afraid. He is without doubt a judge of human nature; there is nothing in me

worth looking at, and he, too, retires. Now at last I am disturbed in earnest. One of the men from the osier beds comes punting in with a load of cuttings and weeds. Picturesque gondolier of the silver Thames, he is clad in corduroys and a blue shirt, and he has a grizzled gray head, and he looks as if he chewed tobacco, and I am positively certain that he

does. I knew he did!

"You haven't got such a thing as a bit of bacca hanging about you, sir?"

He has moored his rough tarred and pitched punt close to my

bows; I don't as a rule hang my birds-eye like calfskin on my "recreant limbs," so I throw him my pouch. He immediately takes some out and plugs his cheek; he throws me back my pouch, and sitting on a heap of weeds in the centre of his modest craft, begins to be sociable. The most pleasant topic of conversation with our labouring poor is ever the most horrible.

"Dreadful drownin' that at the weir yesterday, sir; ain't found the poor gent yet: why, he might turn up here at this here werry

moment-I've heard tell o' such things in my time."

I meekly suggest that as I am rather a timid person, I should be somewhat obliged if the unfortunate deceased would turn up somewhere else. My friend shakes his head wisely.

"I don't suppose as how you believe in ghostesses, sir, but there's a deal o' walkin' in these here parts" (i.e., ghosts

walking).

I ask him if he would like a little whisky and water and hand him my flask. He helps himself moderately, drinks my health modestly, hands back the flask, and wipes his mouth on his shirt sleeve.

"Why, sir, there's the miller's wife's ghost. Awful chap as lived up at the mill, 'undeds and 'undeds a-years ago. Got jealous on her as she danced with another man at the fair. Says the miller (so they all says), 'You've been a-linkin' arm with the Lunnon man and ye've taken fairin's from himat Henley fair, and ye drunk out of his mug o' yale.' Then she ups and says to the miller, 'No, miller, do-ee not say such like. I've been a good and trew wife to thee.' But the miller bein' in a regler tantrum like ups with his right hand and regler Punch and Judy knocks her down into the water, and she was drowned dead then and there. And they do say as how she's seen at times o' misfortun' a-walkin' about nigh the mill a-wringin' o' the water out o' her hair and a-singin' in a creepy-crawly woice as makes the blood run cold most uncommon."

"Why," I say, "you're quite a story teller."

He shakes his head slowly.

"I ain't conceited on it, sir. But I ain't ordinary and every-day like, so the mates says"—he looks at me as if I were about to deny his statement—"and I tell ye what, sir, the day I was born we had a black cat as had a six-toed kitten. But I must be a-goin', sir."

He leaps ashore into an opening in the osiers, and I hear him

rustling among the lithe branches.

The mellow light of the sun has now taken a warmer hue. The distant clouds floating over the still meadows are tinted with rose colour, and the grey branches of the osiers have changed to a shell-pink, and the placid backwater is a sheet of faintest opal. An ill-omened bat flutters down. The day is sunk in rest and I ought to scull home to my dinner at the Highmead Hotel, only

I am not hungry and prefer stopping where I am; for I'll wait till a silver moon shall rise in a blushing sky and—dear me!

there's another water-rat.

And in the quiet here I cannot but think of those old days in the Thames that are "lost to me—lost to me." Why, in this very backwater how many a swim I have had? Old schoolfellow Mac, where art thou now?—Grinding out justice and health in the far-away Orient. Souviens-toi, mon ami, those happy hours when we used to sit on the sunken stumps in the hot July afternoons with only our youthful heads out of the water. And honest, jolly, sunny-hearted Jack. Alas! when I think of thee I hear the strain of the funeral march in the sun-burnt stony defile of the Affghan hills, when they laid thee down to rest in a forgotten grave. And pleasant Dick—well, I wish you hadn't asked me to back that little piece of paper of yours as a mere matter of form.

Let the past keep to itself!

Now, too, chewing the sweet and bitter cud, and as "the evening twilight gathers round," why, as a matter of course, "I think of thee, my love." Again I see that white dress flitting o'er the Thames lawn, those lips that rival the General Jacqueminots decking the standards by the garden path; again I gaze into those eyes blue as the Delphinum formosa, and those cheeks sweet as the Lilium lancifolium rubum grandiflora (I like this, because her name was Flora). You see I am in my fogey days. We used to play at croquet; it was in the dark ages before tennis came to light; it is very touching all the same: I wish that caterpillar had not dropped on to my chin. It is getting chilly and I must be off; thin flakes of mist are rising in the backwater and floating over the meadows. I put the stretchers back in their places, stick the cushions on the seat, put my hookah in the locker and loosen the painter from the willow root. As I stand up and look about me I see the harvest moon in the sky, although. the crimson sunset still glows in the west. I slowly scull past the osiers. I suppose there is a house-boat moored on the other side of the island, for I hear the sound of a piano and a gruff brandied-and-sodad voice yelling out "Queen of my heart, tonight." Bah! why should the peaceful quiet of my backwater be broken by such a hideous discord? I scull swiftly on. I make a sudden turn and am out into the open river. Adieu! Sleep on through the moonlit night, my backwater. May the water-rat revel as he list and draws lines of silver on thy placid surface; may the leaves of the pink bank-geranium flutter silently down and be taken by the Thames fairies for fishing craft! A nightingale is Good-night, my backwater, good-night, good-night, singing. good-

A FALSE START.

BY HAWLEY SMART,

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "BAD TO BEAT," "THE OUTSIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RIPE FOR TEMPTATION.

AUTUMN, with all the glories of its dying tints, has departed; a few last lingering leaves have fluttered lifeless to the ground; hedge and tree stand stark and bare, grimly defying the chill embrace of winter which now threatens them. The markets are glutted with pheasants; the Christmas turkey and the Christmas holly are already shadowed on the horizon, and the Christmas bills, more surely to be depended upon than either turkey or sausages, loom imminent in the near futurity. The Enderbys have paid their farewell calls, have wished their friends good-bye, have shaken the dust of Tunnleton from their feet, and left their characters behind them. Much debate about these latter still raged in Tunnleton, for General Shrewster and Frank Chylton have both now spoken out and narrated the singular story of John Madingley's wedding present. It is known now how the Enderbys suddenly became possessed of such command of money; it is known now what induced Maurice's strange interest in the turf; it is known now what was the cause of that visit to "The Spotted Dog," which had so scandalized Tunnleton; and all but the most bigoted and obstinate of its inhabitants are fain to admit that under similar circumstances they would have acted much as Maurice did. A strong reaction has set in in favour of the Enderbys, while Mr. Richard Madingley's reputation is drowning in the backwater of public opinion. Mr. Molecombe especially is full of regret that he did not sooner recognize the curate's good qualities. rector makes himself peculiarly offensive to Maurice's opponents, by alluding to him as "that excellent and talented young man, whom an obstinate faction literally hounded out of Tunnleton." General Shrewster cuttingly remarks that those who had condemned Maurice Enderby and believed in Richard Madingley had shown they did not know a gentleman when they saw him, and had exhibited much want of tolerance in their judgment.

General Maddox, finding the storm run high, and that he had

been somewhat mistaken in his estimate of Maurice's iniquities, thought it expedient to leave Tunnleton for a temporary change of air, but the irascible Praun stood manfully to his guns, and declared that, if Enderby had not yet been guilty of the charges brought against him, he inevitably would be before he had done; that the thirst for gambling was implanted in his veins; that they might tell this tale of a wedding present to the marines; that if Mr. Enderby had not bet as yet, which he didn't believe, they would very soon hear of his transacting business in that respect, that is if they ever did hear of him again; that Mrs. Enderby had exhibited her fiendish temper when spoken to in her own interest by two of her best friends; that those who lived would see. And then the general faded out of the club billiard-room with a rumbling chorus of expletives suggestive of service seen with that famous army of Flanders. On the subject of Dick Madingley, the general prudently refrained from expressing any opinion. He had his own misgivings concerning that gentleman, and remembered regretfully that he had constituted himself one of his

principal supporters in Tunnleton.

The Enderbys meanwhile had established themselves in comfortable lodgings in the Hyde Park district, and Maurice was turning over in his mind what calling he had better embrace. Thanks to the successes of the "Wandering Nun," he had a very comfortable balance at his banker's, and this would give him time to look around. For some time the Bar commended itself to his attention, but the beginning of that profession was cast among rather stony places, and at the best some time must elapse before he could expect to make even a slender income at it. Many young barristers at the outset of their career supplemented their business with their pens. This Maurice had commenced trying to do at Tunnleton, and still continued in London, but, though it had been attended latterly with some little success, it certainly did not at present promise to swell to a regular income. And yet for the life of him, beyond the Church and the Bar he could see no other profession open to him; medicine required special training, and for the army and navy he was too old for admission. It must not be thought that Maurice was lounging about town in a happy Micawber state of mind waiting for something to turn up; he was strenuously seeking for the "something" himself; but it is not quite so easy at six-and-twenty to find an opening. However, after some weeks' reflection, he attained the first great step. made up his mind what it was he wanted, and there is much in It was true his choice fell on what he believed to be utterly out of his reach; but the apparently unattainable is sometimes achieved by dogged perseverance. He would be a soldier if he could; and he decided that he could do no better than write to consult General Shrewster on that point.

General Shrewster's answer speedily arrived; he would do his

best, and was willing to seize every opportunity; but he pointed out that Maurice's age precluded his getting into the army by any of the regular channels. "Your only chance, my dear Enderby, of joining the profession is by a by-path; they don't stand much of it in these days; still, a commission is got now and again in that way. You must wait for a war of some kind, and with our magnificent and extensive empire the luxury of a small war is a thing we are rarely without for many months together. You must then go to the authorities, and volunteer to go out in any capacity. You will be handsomely snubbed no doubt; never mind that. Your case becomes my business then, and I shall hope that I may have influence sufficient to induce some one employed to take you on his staff, in of course an unacknowledged capacity; then we must trust to the chapter of accidents. If you get a chance of distinguishing yourself, or do good service in the field, your chief may recommend you for a commission, and we must endeavour all we know then to get you appointed to a regiment. You will be beginning late, but if luck favours you with plenty of fighting you may easily make up for a bad start. An old friend of mine was six years an ensign in an infantry regiment, but nevertheless was a Colonel of Dragoons at the end of eleven years. May fortune be as favourable to you when we get you started.

"With kindest regards to Mrs. Enderby,
"Believe me,

"Ever yours,
"JAMES SHREWSTER."

This letter gave much encouragement to Maurice. From that out he began to take much interest in the proceedings of our missionaries, who are the cause perhaps of more of our petty wars than anybody else. That matter of religion has been productive of bitter feeling since the world began, and the desire of the one man to arbitrarily substitute his own creed for that of his neighbours, the cause of much heartburning exasperation. Strengthened by Shrewster's counsels, Maurice gave up the thought of seeking other employment. He read the papers carefully, more especially the Indian news, but the winter glided away, and England seemed as far from an embroglio as ever. It was unfortunate, but an unnatural tranquillity seemed suddenly to have settled over the restless area of the British Empire. Of the numberless races which acknowledge the sway of England, not one at present showed signs of irritability. Maurice even wrote a letter to General Shrewster, complaining of the stagnation in the trade of wholesale murder. The veteran could not help smiling upon receiving his protégés letter, " such a rapid conversion," he murmured, "was never seen. Most decidedly, he was not in his right vocation here." But he wrote a few lines to Maurice and told him not to trouble himself, for that England was very seldom long without a small war

on her hands; that in the meantime he was in the right place both for obtaining the earliest information and for making the earliest application for employment; and further promising to come himself to town directly he saw a chance of forwarding his

(Maurice's) interests.

But as winter merged into early spring, in his search through the papers Maurice found himself constantly confronted with the betting on the spring handicaps, and as the weeks slipped by the betting on the Two Thousand and Derby became added to the price-list. The old infatuation once more took possession of him, although the "Wandering Nun" was engaged in none of these races, but in watching the returns of last year's sport Maurice had acquired a general knowledge of the running of most of the more prominent horses on the turf, and had noted the vicissitudes of their various careers with the keenest interest. Once more he began speculating in his own mind on their chances, and picking out what he conceived ought to be the winners of these races, not that he had the slightest intention of backing them, but simply with a view of seeing whether his judgment would prove to be correct. Once or twice that solemn warning which Shrewster had given him crossed his mind, but there was little cause to feel afraid of trouble accruing to him in that wise at present. was true, racing had begun again, and besides the Lincolnshirehandicap many another big stake had been fought out in the Midlands; but he never went near these battlefields, and contented himself with reading what had happened in the daily papers.

But when a man is ripe for temptation it is odds that his bad angel speedily offers him the opportunity to indulge his weakness. As Maurice was strolling down Oxford Street one morning he ran

across his friend Bob Grafton.

"I didn't know that you were back in town," said Maurice as

they shook hands.

"Well, yes," replied Grafton; "it was getting high time to getback to the dear old wilderness of bricks and mortar. The hunting is about played out, at all events my two or three screws are, and the country is no good for the next five months. I'll tell you what we'll do—there can't be any harm in it now, you know—we'll go down next week and see the City and Suburban run. You cannot help taking some interest in racing as half-proprietor of the crack three-year-old of the season, and the Epsom handicap is a pretty race to see."

Now Maurice had vowed to himself that he would not do this thing; that though he could not help watching racing he would not go near it; but then that was while General Shrewster's word of warning still rang in his ears. That was some time ago now; it was all nonsense; he could look on and enjoy the sport without betting, and, after a moment's hesitation, he yielded to Grafton's

persuasions and agreed to accompany him to Epsom on the following Wednesday, and, this settled, the two friends separated for

the present.

Maurice had, of course, seen big races run before, but for a young man with a strong taste for horses and hunting, racing had, so far, interested him singularly little; it was easily explained: he had, till the last year, never made any study of it, he barely knew the names of even the prominent equine celebrities, he had no knowledge of the colours of the owners; consequently a race to him so far had been like the flashing of a kaleidoscope, and even when the numbers were hoisted the names of the placed horses interested him but little. Now it was different; while at Tunnleton he had surreptitiously studied the calendar attentively and learnt the colours of prominent owners by heart, and he was looking forward with considerable excitement to visiting a race-course under different auspices and accompanied by such a capable mentor as Grafton.

Bob was true to his tryst at Victoria Station.

"Glorious day," he said, as they stepped into a railway carriage; "bright, clear, and no chance of rain; but your top-coat is hardly thick enough, it will be nipping on the Downs, you may depend upon it," and Bob glanced down with much satisfaction at the bulky ulster in which he was himself encased. "I'll tell you what, too," he continued: "I've got a rare hint about the City and Suburban, and we'll see what we can do with it when we get to the course."

Two or three strangers now got into the carriage, and Grafton at once dropped the subject and never opened his lips about it again till they found themselves on the lawn at Epsom, just out-

side the gate leading into Tattersall's ring.

"Now you wait outside for me while I go in and see what's doing," and then Bob slipped through the jealously-guarded

portals of that inner inclosure.

Maurice lingered where he had been left, and, though it was some little time before Grafton returned, yet he found himself thoroughly amused; he fell across three or four old college friends and chatted pleasantly with them, and each of them at parting gave him a different tip for the big race. Maurice's own predilections ran in favour of a three-year-old called Wolfgang, a prominent favourite with the public, and he was wondering whether Grafton would coincide with him in that opinion, and getting slightly tired of the monotonous question "Do you want to do anything, sir?" or the slightly varied formula of "Want to back one, sir?" when Grafton touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"It's all right, old man, I've got a rare good price. Twenty to one to a pony is rather a nice bet if it comes off. I met Jack Danby at dinner last night, and he told me that all their stable are going for old Drumhead. The public don't fancy him a bit;

they think he's got too much weight, but he says the old horse is wonderfully well just now, has won a rare good trial, and is sure to be there or thereabouts at the finish. Now, Maurice, you shall be in a fiver with me. You must have a bet, you know; you can't come down and see the City and Suburban without having a trifle on it, and, win or lose, I'm sure old Drumhead will give you a good show for your money. And now let's come up to our stalls and see the race."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EPSOM DOWNS.

THEY reached their seats in very good time, and Maurice mentioned to his friend his own partiality for Wolfgang, who, as he

pointed out, was very well in the handicap.

"That's just what it is," replied Grafton, "he is rather too well in. He's rather a headstrong horse, and wants a man to ride him. A big colt of that kind, to my thinking, always runs better when not so lightly weighted, for the simple reason the boys can't hold him. However we shall soon see all about it now; here they come."

And in threes and fours the competitors paced slowly past the

stand.

"It is a large field," remarked Grafton, "and a horse wants to be lucky as well as good to win to-day; the starter will very likely have a job to get them off. Twenty-nine of them altogether. There goes Drumhead, Maurice, with the black jacket and crimson sleeves," and Grafton pointed to a big brown horse that was pacing soberly up the course on the far side. Another few minutes and the cavalcade came striding back once more past the stand in their preliminary canter.

"Here comes Wolfgang," cried Grafton, "the blue and white chevrons in the centre. Now do you see what I mean? He's a splendid mover, but look how he is tearing at his bit; it's as much as the boy can do to hold him now, and it's a chance whether he

won't lose control over him in the actual race."

"Yes," laughed Maurice, "in a hunting-field I should say it was odds that a beggar like that spread-eagled the pack. But here comes Drumhead, a very sober, business-like gentleman

that."

"Yes," said Grafton drily, "he is a veteran of five seasons, and knows better than to go using up himself and his jockey in that fashion. But isn't he a rare goer? Look at his long easy stride, and then he has such power. A few pounds more don't make much difference to him. Ah! Hampton, how are you?" continued Grafton, as he nodded to a wiry red-haired

man, who, in an ulster and a pot-hat, had just entered an adjoining

stall. "What are they doing below?"

"Golden Dream is strong as brandy. His party are very confident, more confident than they have any right to be in such a big field. Five to one is hard to get against him now; but there's lots of 'em backed."

"What do you fancy yourself?" inquired Bob.

"Well, you see, Mr. Grafton," replied the bookmaker, "it's not quite my business to have fancies, but I think old Drumhead will run well, and I've kept Flycatcher to run for the book. His people think he'll give a good account of himself."

"It must be a good betting race."

"Very fair, sir," replied Hampton, "very fair. It won't hurt any of us much. But I always like to go for the gloves when I have a chance, and keep one."

"They are down at the post now," said Maurice, "and some of

them appear very fractious."

Grafton looked steadily through his glass at the cluster of silken jackets grouped in the starter's charge. "Yes," he said, "there are three or four of them giving trouble. They're off!" he cried, and the shout was re-echoed from many a throat, only to be followed by a cry of "No, no! false start!" while some half-dozen horses were seen streaming to the top of the hill.

"That's bad for Wolfgang," continued Grafton; "it is as I thought, he's got away with the boy, like two or three more."

Wolfgang, indeed, proved more insubordinate than his companions, and reached the top of the hill before his jockey succeeded in pulling him up. It would be tedious to dwell upon the numerous false starts that took place—as is not uncommonly the case when there is a large number of competitors, and the field comprises three or four fractious youngsters. The bad manners of these sinners are infectious and make even elderly and well-disposed horses forget themselves. Suffice it to say that the backers of Wolfgang and Golden Dream passed a very bad three-quarters-ofan-hour. False start succeeded false start, and upon pretty nearly every occasion Wolfgang and Golden Dream were nearly at the top of the hill before they could be stopped. Latterly Flycatcher, who had been very well behaved during the first part of the proceedings, began to exhibit signs of temper, and even Drumhead and his experienced pilot began to manifest anxiety to be off. At last the welcome roar of "They're off!" was followed by no countercry of "False start!" and, with a sense of relief, the crowd saw the cluster of silken jackets stream up the hill and come sweeping through the furzes. If the backers of the two principal offenders had looked askance at the erratic proceedings of their favourites during the last forty minutes the supporters of Golden Dream had good right to be disgusted with that animal now. After being pretty well first away in every one of the previous "no goes" he had distinguished himself by getting off very badly when the flag fell in earnest. Wolfgang, on the contrary, proved eager to begin till the last, and, coming through the furzes, assumed the command; he must have been a good colt, in rare condition, for notwith-standing all his breaks away, and that he had as good as taken a race out of himself before starting, he led his field a cracker till half-way down the hill leading to Tattenham Corner, when Flycatcher ran up to him, and, getting the inside berth round the famous turn, deprived him of the lead. By this time the scattering of the field was amazing; such tailing had rarely been witnessed, and, out of the twenty-nine who left the starter's hands not two minutes before, there were certainly little more than half-a-dozen left in the race.

At the road Flycatcher was still leading, with Wolfgang lying second. Then came three or four all in a cluster, and barely a couple of lengths behind; while stealing up on the rails, inch by inch, was old Drumhead, whose jockey, watching the leaders keenly as a hawk, already felt victory within his grasp. At the distance Wolfgang was done with, and Flycatcher came on with a lead of two lengths. Half-way up, there were only three left, and a cry of "Come on, Flycatcher," burst from the excited throats of his immediate partisans. At the "Bell" one of the three competitors compounded, while Drumhead rapidly closed with his opponent. Flycatcher's jockey cast an anxious look right and left, and became aware that on his near side the most dangerous horseman that ever steered thoroughbred over Epsom Downs was at his quarters. He had ridden steadily and with judgment up to this, now he lost his nerve, and, anxious to get home, sat down opposite the stand and commenced riding his horse in earnest. His grim opponent smiled as he found, despite his jockey's efforts, Flycatcher could not improve the half-length he held. Then he too began, and driving the old horse all he knew, landed him a clever winner by a good neck.

"A fine shave, Hampton, either way," cried Grafton; "and from here I can't be very sure, but I fancy Drumhead got up in time."

"Not a doubt about it, sir," replied the bookmaker; "if I wasn't sure myself the silence down below would tell me. Flycatcher would have been a clean haul for most of them, but few, I fancy, missed laying Drumhead any more than I did."

"Now, Maurice, we can go down and look after some lunch comfortably. I've collared four, and you are one hundred in, old

boy."

Maurice said nothing, but he could not help reflecting that his determination not to bet had been promptly dissipated. It would be absurd to suppose that he felt penitent or uncomfortable about it, for winning a hundred pounds on a bright breezy April afternoon never oppressed anybody within my recollection. He had not meant to do it, and, great as his excitement had been over

the race, he had honestly never thought of the bet he had upon it. His interest had been absorbed, first in the bold front shown by his own selection, Wolfgang, for so great a part of the distance, then in the sudden advent of Flycatcher, the bookmaker's tip, and lastly, in the triumph of his friend Bob Grafton's favourite, Drumhead. It was some time before they could make their way downstairs, for the crowd were, like themselves, hunger-stricken, and the staircases of the grand stand are by no means broad and stately. Mr. Hampton was jammed up with them on the way down, and, slightly to Maurice's surprise, Grafton insisted on his coming to luncheon with them. The beauty of the hunting-field, quoth Mr. Punch, is that it enables all classes to mix, but for purposes of amalgamation the hunting-field in that matter cannot be compared with the race-course. At length they made their way into the chief refreshment saloon, where Grafton at once ordered everything, including a couple of bottles of champagne. Everything, as he explained, simply meant such food as the hurried waiters could lay their hands upon; while, as for the liquor, "we can only hope it may be drinkable."

Mr. Hampton ate with all the equanimity and rapidity characteristic of his class. They are perfectly used to the losing and winning of money, and as convinced as the proprietors of Monte Carlo that they must win in the long-run, but of time for revelry they are aware they have little during business hours. Mr. Hampton was not long finishing his lunch and tumbler of champagne, and then announced that he must be once more "up and doing." Grafton and Maurice lingered some little time longer.

"I don't care much about the minor races here," said Bob. "We've seen the big event, and, after we've had a stroll through the paddock, I'm good to get back to town again as soon as you like. Sure to see a lot of fellows there, you know, who can tell us all about the race, and sure, too, to encounter several others who always said old Drumhead would win, but who for varied reasons

never backed him."

Maurice returned to town in excellent spirits, and, having thoroughly enjoyed his day, I'm afraid felt but small compunctions concerning that profitable wager that he had allowed himself to be led into. He had no intention of taking to betting, but this was just an odd instance that wouldn't occur again, and as for enjoying a day's racing occasionally it was quite possible to do that without gambling; and, now he had determined to lay aside his sacred calling, there would be no shocking of people's prejudices on that account. From this out he paid as much attention to turf news as if he had been a declared votary of the sport; and as the Epsom carnival drew near Maurice got deeply interested in the probable results. He had not been on a race-course since the triumph of Drumhead, but he had made up his mind to see the Derby, and more especially the Oaks, run for. The "Wandering

Nun" had made a successful début at Newmarket, and carried off the Thousand Guineas in a canter, and racing men were pretty nearly unanimously of opinion that the ladies' race at Epsom was

at her mercy provided she kept well.

The last week in May saw Maurice, accompanied by his friend Grafton, once again on the Epsom lawn. He had been down on the Derby day and had been persuaded by Bob to have ten pounds on the winner of that race. Between that and his half of the stakes for the Thousand Guineas his balance at his banker's waxed fat, and Maurice, ever sanguine, looked upon the success of the "Wandering Nun" this afternoon as a foregone conclusion. Grafton had left him to see what was doing in the inner ring, which Maurice, not being a member of Tattersall's, was, of course, unable to enter. Suddenly his attention was arrested by a voice he thought he recognized vociferating, "The 'Wandering Nun' I'll lay against, here's four to one the 'Wandering Nun.'" Looking in the direction from which the voice proceeded he at once recognized Hampton just the other side the railings which divided the Tattersall inclosure from the Lawn. It flashed through Maurice's mind that this was a chance. The last quotation he had heard against the favourite for the Oaks had been five to two. Leaning over the rails he touched the bookmaker with his umbrella and said, "I'll take fours, Mr. Hampton."

"Very well, sir. What shall it be in? Will you have it in

ponies?"

"No," exclaimed Maurice, "I want four hundred to a hundred; will you lay it?"

"Certainly," replied the bookmaker. "Let's see-Mr. Enby, isn't it?"

"No, that's not quite right," replied Maurice—" Enderby. You met me with Mr. Grafton at the Spring Meeting. You may remember."

"Certainly," replied the bookmaker, who, like most of his class, had a good memory for faces, and then, having made a rapid note of the transaction, he turned round and once more vociferated his war-cry.

Some little time after Grafton rejoined him, and Maurice at

once informed him of what he had done.

"Backed it for a hundred?" said Grafton. "The deuce you have. Surely, your share of the stakes should be good enough for you, and I'll tell you what: I'm very much afraid it isn't coming off this time. I've not been able to catch anybody who can tell me anything about it; but there's a screw loose about the 'Wandering Nun.' Those fellows in there lay as if they knew something, and I saw one or two good judges very busy covering their money. It's not a very healthy sign when the odds against a favourite expand just before the race."

As they made their way to the coign of vantage from which

they meant to view the race, two men who were ascending the stairs just before them enlightened their minds on the subject. "No, the 'Wandering Nun' won't win; she is not even first favourite just now. All the better for us. With her out of the way Belladonna ought to be about good enough."

"Have you heard what's the matter with the 'Nun?'"

"Gone slightly amiss at the eleventh hour, I fancy, as these fillies will sometimes out of sheer perversity. Some of them seem to have got a hint of it in the inclosure, for Hampton, Weston, and two or three more of the most deadly pencillers out, have never ceased betting against her all the morning."

"Pleasant news," said Maurice, with a smile; "however, I can

afford to forgive her if any one can."

The race for the Oaks was devoid of all interest as far as Maurice's champion was concerned; from the fall of the flag the "Wandering Nun" either could not or would not go near her horses. She never looked dangerous from first to last, and finished an indifferent sixth in a field of ten runners. Belladonna and Tamarinde fought out a rattling race, which terminated in favour of the latter by half a length.

"She is not herself, and showed temper to boot, but that running is too bad to be true, and the 'Wandering Nun' will win you a hat-full of money yet, old fellow, before she has done," remarked

Grafton.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

EDITH GETS OVER IT.

ALL great gatherings of the people are remarkable for one thing, to wit, those whom you wish to see you never meet, whilst those whom you would rather did not see you there, do. Your puritanical uncle, from whom you had expectations, who regards racing as the acme of iniquity, is sure to hear that you graced the Derby with your presence. Your spinster aunt, who has strong and intolerant feelings about the scarlet lady of Babylon, is certain to be informed of your attendance at any High Church temple of worship. You cannot as a rule join in any celebration which your dear relatives consider unfitting without its speedily coming to their ears. Our sins have a greater tendency to make themselves heard of than our good deeds. Maurice was most assuredly not thinking of Tunnleton during the Epsom week, but there were Tunnleton men there who saw him, and a large section of Tunnleton is even now bewailing his backslidings and misfortunes.

It is all very well, said Tunnleton, for General Shrewster and one or two more to express their belief in Mr. Enderby's innocence of the accusations laid against him, but "what was he doing at Epsom? Answer me that," demanded General Praun, fiercely; "I am told too that he has lost a very large sum of money."

As Maurice was now currently known to be the nephew of the owner of the "Wandering Nun," the defeat of that animal would naturally give rise to some such rumour in the little town, and it was upon that report that the latter part of General Praun's statement was founded. As for Maurice he troubled himself little about Tunnleton's opinion. He had received his first rebuff on a race-course. He had made so sure of the Wandering Nun's victory that he felt very much as if he had lost a large sum of money, but General Shrewster had gauged him pretty accurately he was just the man of which bold and daring bettors are made. He was not in the least depressed at his defeat, but simply keen and sanguine to recover his losses. His successes had been so unbroken, for every victory of Uncle John's flying filly had been practically a success for him, that he must have been a very craven to have been cast down by the first reverse. This was a quiet week, but next came Ascot, and there Maurice had made up his mind to plunge into the thick of the fray. Even Bessie, though very far from intending it, confirmed him in his resolution. He had mentioned neither his little bet on the Spring Handicap nor his big one on the Oaks, but, like himself, in spite of all her prudent resolutions, she had gradually come to look on Uncle John's racing successes as a welcome contribution to their income, and this last would have been such a grand prize. Such a sum as two thousand pounds odd, which she had come to regard as sure to fall into their hands, was bitter disappointment to be bereft of, and she more than once laughingly expressed such disappointment to her husband.

"Never mind," he rejoined, "our good fairy has one or two engagements at Ascot, and we must hope that next week will find her restored to health. The sporting papers all say it was merely

a temporary ailment."

"You won't go down, Maurice, will you?" she inquired, a little anxiously.

"Oh, yes I shall," he replied. "It's no distance, and I thoroughly

enjoy the sport."

"I am afraid Tunnleton will be more convinced than ever that you bet, if they hear of you at all these race-courses," said Bessie, with a smile.

"And with some justice at last," thought Maurice. "Nonsense!" he said. "What's Tunnleton to me, or me to Tunnleton? Bar the Chyltons and Shrewster, I think we have left no friends behind us there."

"Well, I must say I liked the Molecombes, they were very civil to us at the last, and very anxious to make amends for having lent too credulous an ear to that precious impostor Richard Madingley. By the way, I had a letter from Edith this morning, and, what is

more, it contains a mysterious message to you. She desires her kindest regards, hopes you will forgive her being so rude to you, and bids me say that she bears what you told her constantly in mind; and now, Maurice," cried Bessie quickly, "what did you tell her?"

"A mere nothing; only gave her my opinion regarding Richard Madingley, which she naturally refused to believe true. I am very glad to see that she at all events thinks that I may be right

after all."

"She talks of coming up to town in the course of next week,

when she hopes to see us."

There was one person who shook his head, though not so noisily as General Praun, yet much more seriously, over Maurice's proceedings. It so happened that General Shrewster had heard of Maurice's presence at the Spring Meeting, and he feared that his

prediction was about to be realized.

"It will be the ruin of him, that life in London," he muttered, "with any amount of racing going on all round him. He will begin attending all these meetings, and as for a man of his temperament not betting it is preposterous to think of. Ah! if there was only a chance of getting him into the service in some way. To pack him off to India, or rattle him out on service, would be the making of him just now, but I am afraid at his age there is no opening at present; odd, too, that we are not in a petty quarrel with somebody."

However, for a wonder, the country was not engaged in protecting its frontiers, punishing its feudatories, or annexing its neighbours, and soldiers had nothing for it but to regret the stagnation

of their trade.

Mrs. Enderby was very pleased in the course of the week at receiving a visit from Edith Molecombe. That young lady was unfeignedly glad to find her hostess at home, and seemed still more pleased at discovering that Maurice was likely to be in later in the afternoon. She wanted very much to make friends with Mr. Enderby, who, she had taken it into her head, had a shrewd suspicion of her contemplated elopement, though she hardly anticipated the chance of saying much to him. As it turned out, when he did make his appearance, he was accompanied by his friend Mr. Grafton, and the conversation became, of course, general.

Grafton had never as yet set eyes upon Edith Molecombe, and, knowing her history as he did, looked upon her with no little curiosity. She was looking her best; the worry of her disappointment had imparted a refinement to her features which they had hitherto lacked. She was a nice-looking girl, of medium height, and with a neat figure, which showed off her dainty muslin draperies to the utmost advantage; and, in spite of Miss Torkesly's remark that it was high time she got married, although past her majority, she was still a long way off being an irreclaimable spinster.

"Well worth interfering about," thought Grafton; "it would

have been a sin that a nice lady-like girl like that should have

fallen into the hands of an unscrupulous blackleg."

In spite of his passion for sport of all description, Grafton was a man fond of ladies' society. He could drop all the shibboleth of the race-course in their presence, and, rarer faculty still, could refrain from chanting his prowess amid the turnips or in the hunting-field to their weary ears. He chatted away to his hostess and Edith Molecombe about all the gossip of the day, and what was doing in town, in the liveliest fashion. Fancy-fairs, exhibitions, Royal patronages, Bob Grafton had attended them all and had a piquant anecdote to tell about many of them. He was a popular man, and sure of being heartily received at many a London teatable could he only be entrapped thither. It was not till the last moment that Grafton alluded to the forthcoming Ascot, and then it was briefly to arrange with Maurice where they should meet, but that allusion produced results which Bob never dreamed of.

"How I should like to see Ascot!" exclaimed Miss Molecombe, but the Millisons, with whom I am staying, say they cannot find any one to go halves in a box, and Mr. Millison declares that he

cannot afford to take a whole one."

"And I have never seen Ascot," cried Bessie, "and really," she continued, with a slight toss of her head, "as I am never likely to be part proprietor of another race-horse, I ought to be allowed to see the 'Wandering Nun,' for once. Can't you manage it, Maurice?"

"Of course he can, and must," replied Grafton; "the idea of a lady who owns the best three-year-old of the year not going down to see her mare run! How can you expect her to win, Mrs. Enderby,

if you don't personally smile on her exertions?"

Maurice was rather in a dilemma; he did not want to take his wife down to Ascot, but, considering that all the money which had come to them by means of the "Wandering Nun" was virtually hers, it did seem rather ungracious to refuse her request, so after some little hesitation he yielded, and said that if a box could be procured so late in the day he should be very glad to share one with Mr. Millison.

"Hold him to that, Mrs. Enderby, and never fear but what I'll find the box. It's of course a little late in the day, but there are always a few come in at the last moment belonging for the most part to regular tenants whom something suddenly prevents from attending," and with this Mr. Grafton made his adieux and departed.

"Do you think we shall get the box?" exclaimed Miss Molecombe, with eyes sparkling at the prospect of witnessing the, as

yet, unknown glories of Ascot.

"I can only say the affair could not be in better hands. Grafton knows all sorts of people, and if the thing is to be managed he is the man to do it."

"Yes, Edith," said Mrs. Enderby, who believed immensely in her husband's friend; "I don't think we shall be disappointed, so

you may look out your best frocks."

"It will be delightful. I must run home now and tell Mr. Millison the good news; and, Mr. Enderby," she continued, in a low voice, "I want to apologize for being so rude to you that night; from several things I have learnt lately I am afraid you have told me the truth. I don't want to say anything more on the subject, but you may be sure I shall not forget your warning. Good-bye."

"I think she has pretty well got over it," said Maurice when he

had returned from seeing his visitor out.

"Yes; there is one thing that, once convinced of it, would help a proud girl like Edith Molecombe much in getting over a disappointment; her pride would be so wounded at the thought of there being good reason to doubt her lover being a gentleman."

"Ah!" said Maurice, "I believe distraction is always recommended for these cases,"—he was still feeling a little annoyed at the idea of being saddled with ladies at Ascot—"I suppose Edith

is just in the state described in the old song:

'From place to place they hurry me to banish my regret, And when they win a smile from me they fancy I forget;'

and, as far as my experience goes, they are pretty well justified in doing so. I don't suppose, if it is a fine day and her dress fits, that we shall be wrong in supposing that Edith has forgotten."

"You needn't sneer in that way, Maurice; it would be rather odd if she hadn't. Don't you know that from the day Richard Madingley left Tunnleton she has never even heard of him? That is about three-quarters of a year ago; I think most girls would have ceased to think about such a lover as hers was in that time."

"It would be very curious if it should be so, but do you know, Bessie, it's just possible that Edith might see her old lover at Ascot. I have never seen him myself during my few days' racing experience, but Grafton tells me that he has caught sight of him once or twice, and that whatever he might have been when he was at Tunnleton he has little doubt now that he is enrolled in the ranks of the ring."

"We will hope she won't," replied Bessie; "surely we shall not

be mixed up with those sort of people?"

"No, but I saw at Epsom that some of the smaller bookmakers roamed about in pursuit of their calling in front of the stand, and I daresay they do the same at Ascot; however, it is not very likely to happen, and, let Grafton only get us the box, no doubt we shall have a good time."

CHAPTER XXXV.

A BLACK ASCOT.

NEVER was there greater promise of Queen's weather than the Ascot week held out for the royal meeting. No party on the Waterloo platform was in higher spirits than the Millisons and Enderbys. Old Millison was the head of a well-established broker's house on the Stock Exchange, and dearly loved a bit of racing now and A judicious douceur to the guard enabled them to obtain a compartment to themselves, and, furnished with race-cards, the whole party were speedily engaged in speculation as to what would win the Queen's Vase. Even the ladies caught the enthusiasm, desired to be instructed, and expressed their intention of having a bet upon that race. And Grafton soon found himself invested with the office of the ladies' commissioner, while they themselves plunged into an animated discussion as to what extent their investments were to be carried. Miss Molecombe solemnly handed a five-pound note over to Grafton, which he was adjured to lay out to the best advantage. Mr. Millison deposited a similar stake on behalf of his wife, and then Maurice handed over a like sum on the part of Bessie. Mrs. Enderby was in a state of great excitement as to whether the "Wandering Nun" would run or not for the Queen's Vase. The mare was reported amongst the arrivals at Ascot, and was also coloured on the card. But Grafton rather inclined to the belief that she would not start for that race.

"You see, Mrs. Enderby, the 'Wandering Nun' has two or three valuable engagements this week, and as she wasn't quite herself ten days ago it is probable they will keep her for something that is run over a less severe course than the Queen's Vase."

Now it had been arranged that the ladies should run down for the first day of the meeting and the Cup day. And now arose another problem for Grafton to solve. Mrs. Enderby was naturally excessively anxious to see this famous mare, of which she was half owner, run. Miss Molecombe was equally decided that above all things any race in which the "Wandering Nun" figured must be witnessed. But here came a little divergence of view; whereas Bessie and Mrs. Millison had only suggested a change of day if necessary, Edith thought that they had better adhere to their original arrangement, and come down an extra day if circumstances required it. Racing might amuse Miss Molecombe, or it might not, but she had at all events made up her mind to thoroughly

satisfy herself on this point.

At last Ascot station is reached, and, descending from their carriage, the party followed the throng, making their way up the narrow lane leading to the back of the stand. No sooner are the

ladies comfortably installed in their box than Maurice and Grafton sally forth across the lawn towards the betting-ring to ascertain what is doing, leaving Mr. Millison to do cicerone and point out the humours of the course to the two neophytes. Their box was on the second tier, and looking down upon the crowd that thronged the lawn and race-course afforded ample amusement to Mrs. Enderby and Edith. With their glasses they could see clearly the motley crowd on the far side, drags covered with men whose appearance unmistakably stamped them as wont to mingle in the clubs of St. James's and the drawing-rooms of Belgravia. Other drags there were in which the ladies looked quite as smartly dressed, but exhibited much want of that repose of manner which characterized their neighbours. The men too in these latter were remarkable for a brilliancy of attire, which, if not quite to be picked to pieces, gave a vague idea of not being exactly correct as There were the sable sons of minstrelsy, the tumblers, the gipsies, girls with the last music-hall songs, strong men, fireeaters, card-sellers, and all the miscellaneous crowd that mingle in the throng of a big race-meeting. Although watching them from afar, Edith through her glasses could see quite well enough to be amused at the motley gathering. At length a line of police marched steadily down the centre of the course, other mounted policemen accompanying them, and in an incredibly short space of time the broad green ribbon is cleared of the loungers who but a few minutes since had crowded it. Another minute, and a ringing cheer some distance down the course announces that the royal cortège is close at hand, and immediately afterwards some halfdozen open carriages, with the Prince and Princess of Wales in the leading one, passed leisurely up the centre of the course, and deposited their contents at the door of the Royal Stand.

The sharp note of the saddling-bell is now heard, and a minute or two later the numbers go up for the Trial Stakes. There are five runners, and, as is usually the case in this race, one of them

is at once made a pretty hot favourite.

Grafton and Maurice hurry in at the last moment, and Bob informs the ladies that he has taken two to one against Marmaduke, for what he calls the Ladies' Betting Association, Limited; that he has backed it himself, and fancies it should win. But the Trial Stakes, which inaugurates the meeting, is generally an uncertain race and wont to result in discomfiture to the backers to start with. It follows its charter this afternoon, and our party see their horse beaten in a canter by a little-fancied outsider, about whom very long odds had been offered a few moments before; however, nobody recks much of the first reverse of a big meeting; there is plenty of time for us to recover from such petty disaster; and Grafton, as he laughed gaily and said, "Better luck next time," little dreamed of the scale upon which Maurice had commenced operations. Enderby had made up his mind to bet in

earnest for once, and had unluckily conceived a hazy notion of a system about backing horses. He did not know it, but the idea was as old as the hills, and had brought many a gallant backer to grief in his day. It was simply increasing your stakes after every rebuff, on the principle that your turn must come, and that when it does you will have recovered all your losses and a good deal besides. Maurice had lost fifty pounds upon this race, and had already determined to have a hundred on the next.

"Is my horse going to start, Mr. Grafton?" exclaimed Mrs. Enderby. "What have you heard about her in the ring?"

"No, you won't see her to-day; she is not to go for the Vase, but I hear she is to run on Thursday for the rich St. James's Palace Stakes. Not quite perhaps all the honour and glory of winning the Vase, but a much richer prize, and if the 'Wandering Nun' is at all herself she should win without difficulty."

The Gold Vase, which immediately succeeded, terminated, as the prelude to luncheon always ought to do, in the triumph of the favourite, and a monetary success to the little party all round, and they adjourned to their cold lamb, lobster salad, and champagne, which Millison's servants had laid daintily out on the lawn at the back of the stand, in the highest of spirits. The stockbroker was a lover of the flesh-pots, and had a capital notion of doing things properly, and two bulky hampers in charge of his butler and footman had accompanied them from town. Maurice, in particular, was in high feather; he had put a hundred on the winner and was consequently more enamoured of his theory than They were very merry over the lunch, and, when they trooped back to the box to once more enjoy the sport, Miss Molecombe vowed that racing was the most exciting amusement in which she had ever embarked, and that a proprietress of racehorses like Mrs. Enderby was a woman wondrously favoured of fortune.

"You will have to lay out some of your winnings," exclaimed Edith, "in purchasing two or three more racers. It must be so nice to have a few of one's own."

"No, no, Mrs. Enderby," laughed Grafton, "we must make a great deal more money than we've done so far before we start our stud. You are to appoint me your master of the horse, remember, and I can't authorize our beginning as yet."

It would be tedious to follow our friends through all the vicissitudes of fortune. Interesting as the fierce battle between backer and bookmaker is to those engaged, it is somewhat wearisome to read about. Suffice it to say, that wagering under the sage advice of Bob Grafton, when after the last race but one they made their way back to the train, they were all winners with one exception. Flushed with success, Maurice had trusted to his own judgment instead of relying upon his mentor, and unfortunately had done so for a considerable sum. He alone had lost money on the day;

the others, although far from requiring sacks to carry home their winnings, were still victors on the afternoon; and Edith Molecombe, at all events, was convinced that racing was the sport of kings, as, indeed, it may well be termed so far as English monarchs

are concerned.

Many a black Ascot has opened as seductively as this one, and looked like a very garden of Bendemeer to the fashionable London throng, who have already found their resources severely taxed to keep pace with the constantly recurring exigencies of the season. The veterans put but little faith in these gay openings, and the fielders blench not a whit because the first day goes against them. The former have seen the storm-clouds gather heavily round the Royal Hunt Cup—that prettiest of gambling races—and the decision of the Wokinghams cause Ascot to close, metaphorically speaking, in a gloom dark as Erebus. It had been settled that the ladies were not to go down on the off-day, but the men all met again at Waterloo, Maurice keener than ever for the fray, and with a firm conviction, shared indeed by the other two, that it was a card easy to pick winners from. But disaster came with the opening race, when the favourite, upon whom two, and in some instances even three, to one were laid, was most ignominiously The second race was attended with a similar result, and then came the pause which usually precedes the Royal Hunt Cup. The competitors were numerous, and the betting remarkably heavy; but the powerful stable that owned Duke Humphrey were apparently not to be stayed by any efforts of the bookmakers, and continued to back their horse. Two of the patricians connected with that stable were as shrewd judges and as bold speculators as any men on the turf, and sheer weight of metal kept their horse at the head of the poll, although many of the others were also backed heavily. Acting under the advice of Grafton, Maurice had thrown in his lot with Duke Humphrey.

He was standing against the rails of the lawn, scanning the competitors as they cantered past, when a voice he thought he

knew struck upon his ear.

"Do as you like," said the speaker, "but I tell you it is so. I know all that; I've heard it all before. Lord Lynton and Sir Ralph don't throw their money away, I grant you. They make mistakes at times, and they're making one here. There's a tout I employ on those Downs, and he's about the best of his calling in England. They've tried Duke Humphrey all right enough, but their training-ground is not the new mile at Ascot, and they have not yet quite opened their eyes to the fact that their horse is a rogue."

Maurice had recognized the speaker by this, and looked round to make sure that he was right in his conjecture. Richard Madingley was turned slightly away from him, but the satchel hung from his shoulder left no doubt about the part he played on

the race-course.

"And you think, then," said Dick's companion, a somewhat over-dressed young man, "that Jerry can beat the Duke?"

"No, not if the Duke would try; but he won't like the hill, and he won't like the struggle; and so I recommend you, if you want to get out of your scrape, to back Jerry this time. You can get a good price, at least you could just now. I've made my book

for him, and backed him besides."

Maurice wondered if there could be anything in what Madingley said; he had looked with rather contempt upon that gentleman's judgment at Tunnleton, and considered that he himself was a far better judge, which, had he analyzed it, was simply based upon the fact that he happened to know more about the "Wandering Nun" than Madingley. No, he decided if he was to let his own opinion be swayed by every idle rumour he heard, he might back half the horses in the race. "Jerry," he muttered contemptuously, and here he turned round and asked one of the outside bookmakers what that horse's price was.

"I've done on the race, sir," replied the man civilly, "but I

laid one hundred to six about that one."

Maurice walked quietly back to his box to see the race, where he found his two friends duly installed, and with their glasses in their hands. There was the usual slight delay at the post, and then the bell announced that the field for the Hunt Cup was away.

"We can't see 'em till they top the hill," cried Grafton. "Keep your glasses on its crest, Maurice. All right so far," he exclaimed, as the charging squadron, glittering like a tulip bed in the summer sun, flashed in sight, "Duke Humphrey is lying fourth."

And now the squandering began. A little more and there were only six in it, opposite the stand there were but three. Duke Humphrey was leading, but sticking to his quarters like a bur on the hand were a pair of antagonists who promised to give trouble. Another stride or two and the one on the near side has shot his bolt and gives way beaten, but the one on the off closes with him inch by inch, and no sooner does the Duke find this doughty opponent at his girths than he lays back his ears, and swerving across the course enables Jerry to win by a good half-length. From the box they cannot be sure of the result, but when the numbers go up Maurice sees that Dick Madingley has been at all events right this time. The ill-luck of the backers continues through the afternoon, favourite after favourite goes down, and on the homeward journey Maurice feels a little serious when he reflects upon his losses.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ST. JAMES'S PALACE STAKES.

MAURICE had begun the week with a very handsome balance at his banker's, derived entirely from the victories of Uncle John's flying filly, but he might well look serious when he thought of the inroads he had made upon that balance during the last two days. The latent demon of gambling had been aroused in him, and he had already discovered that it requires a man of iron will to follow a system on the turf, and a little more knowledge of that amusement will show him that a system is fallible on a race-course as it is at the gaming-table. It is certainly harder to carry out, for in the latter case you will be allowed to pursue your theory untroubled by advice, whilst in the former you are generally advised of nearly as many winners as there are runners in the stake about to be contended for. Neither his wife nor Grafton had the slightest idea of the magnitude of his speculations.

Mr. Hampton the bookmaker was a prominent member of Tattersall's, and at Ascot had a particular coign of vantage, which custom seemed to have made his own. At the corner of the inner ring, adjacent to the Grand Stand, and just beneath the lower gallery of the Iron stand, was a square pillar about five feet high; from the top of this Mr. Hampton was wont to offer to give or take the odds to all comers. It was an excellent position for his purpose; everybody could find him, and he was both within reach of those in Tattersall's inclosure and also of those without the pale. His secretary stood, book in hand, at the foot of the pillar, taking note of his transactions as quickly as they were made, and such was the swarm of customers at the foot of the pillar that it was all the secretary could do to write down his employer's wagers.

Long habit had made the pair thoroughly expert at their business, and it was rarely that Hampton's memory faltered as to what sum he had laid against any particular horse. It was with this man that Maurice had carried on his speculations. He could not go into the inner ring, and in the outer lawn had not the knowledge which would enable him to distinguish good men and true

from the pirates who mingled with them.

Hampton knew Mr. Enderby to be a friend of Grafton, and that had been introduction enough for him; besides, he had given the bookmaker a hundred-pound note through the medium of Grafton, when the "Wandering Nun" was beaten for the Oaks, and therefore Hampton had been only too glad to welcome him as a new client.

There had never been such a glorious Ascot week known, said the pleasure-loving dames and demoiselles who, robed in their freshest and prettiest, thronged the Waterloo platform on the day

of the Gold Cup.

"There had never been such a deuce of a time seen," said their male belongings, who had passed the last eight-and-forty-hours in weary battle with the bookmakers. Men studied the card gravely, and pronounced it promising.

"A winning card, Mrs. Enderby," said Grafton gaily; "better

than the first day's even, and we did pretty well then."

"And it need to be," replied old Millison, "for if they don't have a change for the better the gentlemen will be all clean

broke."

"We are going to see your colours out to-day, Mrs. Enderby, and I think we must all have a plunge on the 'Wandering Nun.' She ought to win the St. James's Palace Stakes, if well, and they would hardly have sent her to Ascot unless she was supposed to have a race in her."

"Yes, Mrs. Enderby," exclaimed Edith, "when we see your pretty blue and white sleeves go by victorious our throats must make the welkin ring. Isn't that the proper way to put it, Mr.

Grafton?—and oh! by the way, what is the welkin?"

"That's known only to the poets," replied Grafton, "and the

craft keep that mystery safely to themselves."

They arrived at Ascot in time to see the royal cortège sweep up the course in state; the Master of the Buckhounds, attended by his huntsman and whips, riding at the head of the procession. There was much cheering from all parts of the course, and much waving of pocket handkerchiefs from the Grand Stand, as the prince and princess bowed their acknowledgments. Royalty safely disposed of, racing people settled down to the regular business of the day.

It would have been well for Maurice Enderby if he could have overheard a conversation which took place on the corner of the lawn next the race-course about this very time. Mr. Pick and Richard Madingley had been holding grave conference over the afternoon programme, at the conclusion of which Mr. Pick remarked—

"We had a rare innings yesterday. I tell you what, Dick, the swells looked blue enough over it, but I've a strong idea that indigo will be nothing to 'em by the time the card's finished to-day. This 'Wandering Nun' will be facer the first, there'll be heavy plunging on her, and I've got a hint from a man I can depend on that she

is not quite up to concert-pitch."

"There is one thing more; you remember that young parson who spoilt my game at Tunnleton. I always stuck to it he was a betting-man, and he is here, and what is more he is backing 'em and no mistake. I was just putting a young friend of mine on Jerry for the Hunt Cup yesterday, when I twigged him with his ears back listening to all I was saying. Well, after that I stalked my gentleman and found him interviewing Hampton before every

race. Now I owe that fellow a pretty heavy score, and I should like to settle a bit of it at this meeting. If you give me a lift I think we can induce him to back a loser or two pretty heavily."

"Well," rejoined Mr. Pick, "from all you've told me I shouldn't think you would be the man to whom he would come for advice, but if you can speak to him put him on the 'Wandering Nun' to

begin with."

"I can't speak to him for one thing," rejoined the other, "and he'll back that one safe enough without ever a hint from me; he's always been mad about her; no, from my being right about Jerry he's pretty sure to pay attention to what I say; I want him to overhear a little talk between you and me before the Gold Cup; you understand?"

Mr. Pick grinned in reply.

"Yes," he said, "that also promises to be a queer race, but we'll put the parson on the winner, no fear—rather!" and, with an ominous wink, Mr. Pick disappeared through the wicket of the

inner ring.

One or two minor races were disposed of to start with, resulting in no material difference between backers and fielders, and then the numbers were hoisted for the St. James's Palace Stakes. The "Wandering Nun," was the cynosure of all eyes in the pack; she was pronounced a grand mare, and many of her admirers marvelled not a little how she had lost the Oaks; her coat shone like satin, and the crowd generally announced her in splendid condition. One or two old hands, and more especially those who knew the mare best, shook their heads and muttered "She would be the better for another gallop or two," but these cavillers were deemed hypercritical, and the crowd, full of enthusiasm for John Madingley's filly, rushed back to the ring prepared to stake their money freely on what many of them declared was the "best thing of the meeting." The fielders were apparently of the same way of thinking, and declined, in the first instance, to do business under three to one "on," and some of the irrepressible, who are always anxious to be early in the market, laid those odds on the "Wandering Nun." The bookmakers took a point shorter later on, but excitable Maurice, one can easily imagine, had not waited for that but promptly laid Hampton six hundred pounds to two hundred on the mare as soon as the betting opened.

That there was great excitement in Mrs. Enderby's box it is needless to say. The ladies had not only invested one of those subscribed fivers but all such winnings as still remained to them from the Tuesday, and their glasses were riveted on the "Wandering Nun" the minute she made her appearance. A slashing, dark chestnut mare, with not a speck of white about her save the blaze on her face, and looking really fit to run for her life, except to a thoroughly trained eye, owned by a man also well acquainted with the mare. The ladies were enthusiastic, and even Grafton, accustomed as he

was to the vicissitudes of the race-course and carefully as he had scanned the "Wandering Nun" in the paddock, told Mrs. Enderby that he thought she was sure to see her favourite win to-day.

The race may be told in a few words; the "Wandering Nun" apparently held her opponents safe until she reached the distance, then it was seen that she was palpably in difficulties, and though she struggled gamely till her jockey ceased riding, she only finished a bad third to two animals of infinitely inferior class to herself. The want of condition up the punishing Ascot mile had beaten her.

A fierce shout of exultation with which the ring welcomed the downfall of the favourite was succeeded by an ominous silence. Everybody connected with racing knew that one of the heaviest betting meetings seen of late was going all one way, and that the week was likely to end in wide-spread disaster and leave many a gap in the fashionable world; even the ring looked somewhat askance at its good fortune, and a hard-headed northern member of the fraternity was heard to say to one of his exultant brethren—

"Noa, noa, laad, it's too good; if the swells don't have a turn or two before we finish there will be no saatling worth speaking of"

In Mrs. Enderby's box there was much lamentation; not only had they lost their money, and women never like that, but they were all much mortified at seeing the famous mare, with which they had proudly identified themselves, beaten, and it was with a sense of relief that Bessie and Edith Molecombe welcomed Grafton's proposal that they should take a turn on the lawn and then walk up the course, have a look into the royal inclosure, and see the horses parade for the Gold Cup. Maurice had disappeared the moment the race was decided, and Mrs. Millison, a portly lady not much given to exertion, declined to leave her chair even to feast her eyes on the millinery triumphs displayed in front of the Royal Stand; however she made no objection to being left alone, and so, under the charge of Mr. Millison and Grafton, the others sallied forth.

Like many another plunger of that memorable Ascot, Maurice glanced moodily at his betting-book and wondered whether he could afford to go on; he knew very well that he had no more right to continue than he ever had to have begun, but still, thanks to the thousand guineas, he had not yet got to the end of his balance at his banker's. It was impossible that things could go on like this; it would never do to give up now, luck must turn. He sauntered idly towards the entrance of the inner ring.

The next race, which was a small one, had virtually resolved itself into a match; it looked pretty well a certainty for one, and, flushed with success, the ring were liberal enough to take short odds about the result. Once more did Maurice boldly reply to Hampton's challenge, and this time his venture was crowned with

success. He had the satisfaction of feeling that he had reduced his losses to some small extent. He had not been up to the box to see this race but had viewed it from the rails, and, as he turned away, he found himself face to face with Dick Madingley.

"How do you do, Mr. Enderby?" said Dick; "you were pretty severe upon me because the people at Tunnleton took an idea into their heads and declared that I was a liar and impostor; do

you think there is much to choose between us now?"

"You'll be good enough not to address yourself to me in future,"

rejoined Maurice haughtily.

"Now don't go on in that way, Mr. Enderby. I'll own I couldn't stand you at Tunnleton because I looked upon you as an arrant hypocrite; you declared you never bet on races."

"Nor did I," rejoined Maurice quickly.

"No matter; I suppose you'll hardly pretend you don't now, and I like you all the better for it. I'd do you a good turn if you would let me."

"I want neither your advice nor your conversation," replied

Maurice coldly.

"Go your own way then," replied Dick; "you must have had a pretty bad time, like the rest of them, and the upset of the 'Wandering Nun' would not improve things for you; she was a favourite of yours from the first. Oh, you needn't be afraid," continued Dick, as Maurice made a gesture of impatience; "after the Gold Cup is over perhaps you'll wish you had listened to what I had got to say," and, turning sharply on his heel, Madingley disap-

peared amongst the throng.

Maurice could hardly suppose that Dick would do him a good turn. He must have been singularly blind if he had failed to see the rage and malice concentrated in Madingley's face at their last interview. He had not been the cause of his exposure in Tunnleton, but it was he who had baffled his projects by threatening to divulge the further information he had acquired concerning him. No living thing likes being hunted, except perhaps foxes, and man is wont to treasure up fierce resentment against his social pursuer. No, whatever his motive might be, it would be absurd to suppose that he could feel any desire to be of use to him, Maurice Enderby. And yet Maurice could not divest himself of the idea that Dick was really in possession of mysterious information about the big race now so soon to be run.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GOLD CUP.

MRS. ENDERBY and Edith most thoroughly enjoyed their stroll through the lawn. Under Grafton's guidance they passed through

the wicket, and proceeded up the course till they were opposite the Royal Inclosure, where they feasted their eyes on the very last efforts of the crack London modistes. It is a wondrous show, that lawn on a fine Cup day, when fashion's fairest daughters ruffle it in all their bravery. It was their first experience of Ascot, remember. The two country girls were delighted with everything they saw. Grafton, it need scarcely be said, knew by sight everyone who was any one in the London world, and pointed out many celebrities to his charges. "And now," he said, as the roar of the betting-ring broke once more upon the ear, "it is getting time we went back. The numbers are up, and we shall have the horses out directly."

As they re-entered the wicket, Grafton and his companion had fallen a little behind Bessie and Mr. Millison. Suddenly Bob felt a strange flutter on the little hand within his arm. He turned quickly to see what was the matter. Miss Molecombe's face was very pale, and her eyes were looking into infinite space with that far-away look which we all assume when determined not to see

any one.

Just in front of them stood Mr. Richard Madingley, busily vociferating—

"The Gold Cup I'll take odds upon."

He was well-dressed enough, but there could be no mistaking what his vocation was even by one so little versed in race-courses as Edith Molecombe. He was busy taking money, and giving in exchange tickets which he took from the bag slung across his shoulder. Grafton would have led his charge away, but ere he could do so Madingley had caught sight of them, and, though Edith was most certainly not looking at him, the unabashed scamp, with a smile, deliberately raised his hat to her. As Grafton told Maurice afterwards, he never felt more inclined to try his hand at physical force; but, although aware that this man's salutation was a positive insult to Miss Molecombe, there was of course nothing to be done; to have resented it would have only made a scandal, in which Edith's name would have been bandied about.

Grafton, having seen Miss Molecombe safe to the box, at once disappeared to see what was doing in the betting-ring. On his way thither he ran across Maurice, who eagerly asked him what he thought of the Cup.

"Well, I don't know much what to think of it. How are they

betting?"

"There are only two backed in earnest. They take even money about the Viking, and there's a large party who are backing old Bellona."

"Ah! I can quite understand that," observed Grafton. "They know the old mare can go the course, and it's yet to be seen whether the young one can stay." And with that Grafton disap-

peared into the inner inclosure. Almost immediately afterwards Maurice's attention was arrested by the voice of Dick Madingley. He was talking to one or two of his brethren, and apparently

perfectly unaware that Maurice was in his vicinity.

"No, don't tell me," he was exclaiming in much the same arrogant way he had been wont to assert his opinion at the Tunnleton Club, "this Viking won't win. Old Bellona will gallop him to a standstill. The swells will get another spill, you see if they don't. I have it pretty straight from the stable. They very much doubt whether their horse can stay, but they hope it will be a slow run race, and then they know that they can cut the old mare down for speed. But the Bellona people are quite as wide-awake as their neighbours, and they mean the race to be run right through."

The little group seemed much impressed with Mr. Madingley's views, and they all agreed that to take three to one about Bellona under the circumstances on this information was about as good a chance of making money as often fell to men, and then apparently

separated to take advantage of it.

Maurice was strangely impressed with this conversation. It coincided in some measure with Grafton's idea of the race, and moreover it offered the great chance to recoup himself for which he so anxiously looked. His mind was made up quickly; he would wait no longer, but take Hampton's fifteen hundred to five hundred if he could get it.

Verily, General Shrewster was right. The gambler's instinct

was strong within Maurice.

Hampton hesitated for a moment, and then replied, "All right, Mr. Enderby, three monkeys to one Bellona;" and, that little bit of business satisfactorily concluded, Maurice thought he would go back to the box and see the race. There he was not a little surprised to find that Grafton had changed his opinion and backed the favourite, both for himself and his fair clients.

"You told me you fancied the mare for the race," said Maurice.

"So I did," replied Grafton; "but when I got inside there I found all the best judges were going for the Viking, and they assured me there wasn't the slightest doubt about his staying."

Well, these are the sort of rumours that backers of horses are usually destined to hear till the race is run. Up to the very last moment there is always somebody to presage disaster to the steed that carries your investment. Some gobe-movche invariably encounters you with tales detrimental to that luckless horse's welfare. He may be right, he may be wrong, but his actual knowledge is certainly no more than that of the policeman who keeps the wicket; and I once saw that official gravely consulted on the subject of the Gold Cup by an unmistakable West-end cockney.

There was no delay at the starting-post on this occasion. The

half-dozen runners were dispatched almost immediately, and the race itself was as tame a struggle for the Cup as ever was seen, and may be told in two lines. Bellona made running till they were in the Swinley Bottom, when Viking took up the running and galloped home an easy winner by twenty lengths, to the great delight of Mrs. Enderby and Edith. The irony of fate is common enough on our leading race-courses. Wives and daughters rejoice over the gloves and bon-bons they have won, knowing little what the triumph has cost their husbands and brothers. The fickle goddess is capricious, and is wont to deal better with our feminine belongings than she does with ourselves.

Maurice laughed gaily as he congratulated his wife and the rest on their success, and in answer to Grafton's inquiries as to what he had won himself, replied, "I was not so lucky as you all seem to have been; my investment, sad to say, was on Bellona," and then

Maurice abruptly left the box.

This last defeat was a crushing blow. He knew now that he was getting near the end of his resources, and felt that he had hardly capital enough remaining with which to take advantage of a turn in the tide, even if it should come. It had not occurred to him that the conversation he had overheard had been got up expressly for his benefit; and, only that Madingley, afraid of risking this chance of wreaking his vengeance, sternly discountenanced it, one of his companions upon that occasion would have endeavoured to lay Maurice the odds against Bellona, which mare the confederates believed really to have no sort of chance with the favourite.

But Dick Madingley's malice would have hardly been gratified without his making Maurice aware that he had been the victim of a little conspiracy. One of his associates had dogged Enderby until he had heard him make that big bet with Hampton in accordance with the false information he had been allowed to overhear. The confederate quickly reported the fact to his principal, and it was with much chuckling Madingley and his companions saw the race terminate just as they had anticipated.

"Come along," said Dick in such jubilant tones as a man may use who has won his money and worsted his enemy; for although Dick had fielded in the first instance he had turned round and backed the favourite to finish with. "Come along," he said, "I want to give the parson another chance; he benefited so much by listening to gentlemen's private conversation last time that he is safe to be keen to be in our little secrets again," and Mr. Madingley favoured his friends with a wink and grimace.

"Yes," rejoined Mr. Pick, "it was a very neat little plant, but it is a thousand pities we couldn't have collared that five hundred instead of Hampton, it would have been so much more finished

like."

The confederates had not to go far before they saw Maurice,

smoking a meditative cigar and thinking over what he had best do next. With another wink at his companions Dick took up his position within earshot of, but with his back towards, Maurice. They clustered round him like bonnets round a card-sharper, and

then Mr. Madingley commenced his narration.

"I'll just tell you how it was, you never saw such a game. There's a fellowhere whom I've vowed to pay out for an ugly trick he served me in the country not long since. He's as innocent as a baby when he gets on a race-course, and I saw him going about with his ears cocked listening here and listening there, and seeing what he could make of it all. When he had put it all together I knew he looked upon it that I was a tidy judge of racing, and it suddenly occurred to me to put him on a 'wrong 'un' for the Cup. I let him hear a valuable piece of information, and am blest if the

sagacious cuss didn't trot off and back it for a monkey."

An ostentatiously loud guffaw followed the conclusion of Dick's narrative. It was not that his listeners were really amused, it was more like the conspirators' chorus in "Madame Angot," a necessary fanfaronade for the proper rendering of the plot. Maurice had heard every word, and knew that he was intended to hear it, and could have grovelled on the lawn at his own foolish-Was it likely that any information ostentatiously dropped by such men as Dick Madingley could have any other object than to delude the bystanders? Was it likely that Madingley would drop a hint for his benefit? Of course not; but that he would gladly be the cause of his losing a lot of money was easy of comprehension. He had thirsted himself to strike Dick to the ground at Tunnleton, and was it to be supposed that Dick's feelings towards him had not been of similar nature? He had read of the salting of gold and diamond mines, and saw now, idiot that he was, how possible it was to salt gold mines on the turf. If there was one man at Ascot whose ill-will he had good cause to dread it was Richard Madingley, and he had been insane enough to follow his advice on a big race.

"Fool! fool! thrice sodden fool!" he muttered. "The veriest child would have mistrusted one who had always been his avowed enemy, and I must actually put faith in him. I start on a system and neglect to follow it. I put my own judgment of racing against Grafton's, who has been following it the last ten years. No wonder I have come to grief. To finish with," he continued grimly, "I happen to have thrown in for the worst meeting backers have had this year. Well, I've gone too far to give in now. It may as well be a little worse as left where it is. Luck must

change, one cannot always go on backing losers."

It is to be hoped not, still the sad fact remains that one may do so for a very considerable time. There is nothing in this life in which luck does not form an ingredient.

Bob Grafton, lounging through the lawn where he smoked his

after-luncheon cigar, suddenly ran across Mr. Hampton. "Well, we got the best of you that last time, but you and your brethren

are having a rare meeting."

"Well, yes, Mr. Grafton, we are; as poor Ned Caley used to say, I am almost tired of winning money. I beg pardon, Mr. Grafton, there's a gentleman you introduced me to, who I think you should give a hint to. Mr. Enderby is having an awful time."

"But he's not betting high, surely?" exclaimed Grafton.
"Well, sir," replied Hampton, "of course I don't know anything about his income or resources, nor do I know what other bets he may be making, but he must be getting on towards a couple of thousand to the bad in my ledger."

"I had no idea he was betting like that," replied Grafton quietly. "He don't usually speculate so heavily, but he's good

enough, if that's what you mean."

"No, Mr. Grafton, I didn't quite mean that. I only mean that he's backing his bad luck right out. I've seen a meeting or two like this before, and I can only say if I was a backer I should turn

it up and go back to London."

As Grafton walked away he reflected rather seriously over what the bookmaker had told him; he had no doubt that Hampton's story was correct, and that Maurice, carried away by the excitement of what might be called his first race-meeting, had staked heavy sums again and again. He knew perfectly well what this was to the Enderbys. It meant sweeping away all these winnings of the "Wandering Nun," even if they sufficed to pay Maurice's liabilities. He thought rather ruefully that it was he who had been at the bottom of this Ascot excursion. However, there was no more to be said, but it made Grafton somewhat grave for the remainder of the afternoon.

They were a somewhat sombre carriage-full on their way back to town. First and foremost they were all tired, and in the crowd of the Cup day had a considerable difficulty in getting away from Ascot station, two trains leaving before they succeeded in obtaining the accommodation they required; and those who have experienced that wait at the station after a fatiguing and unsuccessful day will quite understand that there was not much life or conversation in the party on the way home—in short, most of them, I think, slept more or less, and if Maurice did not he was at all events chewing the bitter cud of his own thoughts.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE NEWS OF ISANDHLWANA.

Ascor is over: there is nothing left but to pay the bill, and Maurice sits gloomily this Saturday morning, pondering over the pages of his betting-book. It is no use hoping for a mistake in the figures, he has gone over it at least a dozen times, trying

to cheat himself with the idea that he has added it up wrongly; but no, the figures are inexorable, his losses are larger than he had fancied them. Even if he drains his banking account to the last shilling it will not suffice to discharge his Ascot liabilities. He does not quite know what to do; he must go and consult Grafton about it; indeed, he would have to do that in any case, as it was through him that he usually settled with Hampton. He did not quite relish the confession he had got to make to his friend. It is difficult to mask ill-tidings from those who love us and are accustomed to note every change of our face—and, to add to his perplexities, Bessie saw something had gone wrong with him, and, though she was very far from guessing the whole truth, it did not require much penetration on her part to suspect that he had lost more money during the week than was justifiable.

However, having calmed her apprehensions as well as he could, he started forth for Grafton's chambers in Half Moon Street, and found that gentleman at breakfast, although it was past noon.

"Come in," he said, "and sit down; I always take it out after a hard week's racing, especially when it has been such a week of disaster as this has. I've a philosopher amongst my acquaintance who always takes to his bed when he is hard hit; as he says, it is the most economical thing you can do. You don't spend money,

and are hedging any amount of sleep for livelier times."

All the time Bob rattled on he was watching his companion's face keenly—as he rightly guessed, he was about to listen to a discussion of ways and means. He had listened to so many from all sorts of people that he was quick at reading the signs of the storm-beaten. Indeed, he enjoyed quite a reputation in this way. Clearheaded and fertile in resource, it was quite a common saying amongst his own set, "Go to Bob Grafton, he'll pull you through if anybody can."

"I want to consult you, Bob," said Maurice, as he took a chair.
"I know," interrupted Grafton; "you got hit deuced hard at
Ascot. I'd no idea you were betting heavily, or else I should have
told you not to be such a fool as to do it. However, it's no use talking
about that now; the question is, what does the scrape come to?"

"Twenty-four eighty," replied Maurice, as he handed his memo-

randum book to his host.

"Well, you've joined the plunging school with a vengeance," rejoined Grafton. "I heard something of this accidentally at Ascot. The names of the heavy losers generally ooze out in the ring, and I suppose you attracted attention as a new hand. But I'd no idea that it was so bad as this. Well, it's no use going over it all, you've no doubt totted it up correctly. How it was lost is of no consequence—that it has got to be paid at once—is. What are the assets?"

"About five hundred short of that amount if I draw out my

last shilling."

"Well, you can't quite do that, you must have some ready money to carry on with. Hampton, I see, is your main creditor. You must let me have as much as you can spare on Monday morning. I'll pay off the few minor creditors, I will give Hampton all there is left on account, and ask him to give you time for the remainder."

"Yes," said Maurice gloomily, "I know all that can be done, but the worst of it is, I don't see what time is to do for me."

"I do," rejoined Grafton; "and, if you'll promise me solemnly not to go plunging any more, I can give you a gleam of comfort in that direction. Remember, the 'Wandering Nun' was all amiss at Epsom, and she hadn't got over it at Ascot, but I can tell you what I saw there, some of the cleverest men on the turf were backing her quite quietly for the Leger. Now, you stand to win quite enough upon her without backing her. Half the Leger Stakes will satisfy Hampton and put your banking account in a very satisfactory position—should it happen to come off."

"Let me only get out of the trouble that way, and I will give my word never to go racing again. I can't trust myself, Bob; it's intoxication, infatuation, what you will; but I couldn't look on at

it without betting."

"No, I understand you now," replied Grafton, "and deeply regret I ever persuaded you to accompany me to a race-course. I've met your sort before, nothing but total abstinence is of any use to you; and I tell you what, old man, the sooner you get something to do—to work your superfluous steam off at, the better. You're certain to come to grief if you stop idling about town."

Talk about marking out our own career, how very little we often have to say to it. Men who have started for the bar have become eminent dramatists; men who have started for the navy have become famous judges; while warriors like Cromwell and Clive were not bred to arms. Had it not been for Uncle John's wedding present, Maurice Enderby might have blossomed into a respectable clergyman; as it is, wherever his future may lie, he will never attain celebrity in this wise. Yet Maurice's pen was getting recognized amongst the guild of literature as that of a bright, lively writer with considerable power of satire, one who handled the topics of the day in light, masterly, and, above all, readable fashion. It might not be very lucrative employment as yet, but he had at all events established a market for his wares.

Now another person whose character had been somewhat altered by Ascot was Miss Molecombe. She had been, previously to her affair with Dick Madingley, a quiet conventional young lady; but these latter events had imparted a certain amount of dash and possession to her manner which it had not possessed before. She had been pretty well cured of her passion for Dick Madingley before going to stay with the Millisons. No girl who had dared so much for a lover could have stood the cool, premeditated neglect that followed the fiasco of her attempted elopement. She had

stood up for him for some time, but her womanly pride had been cut to the quick, and it must have been indeed a very clear explanation which would restore him to her good graces. At Ascot she saw him in his true colours, and the very salt was sown over her dead love with a vengeance; but strange to say she returned to Tunnleton with a great admiration for Maurice Enderby. He had been so loyal and true to her, and above all, the very iniquities now charged against him rather glorified him in her eyes. Mr. Enderby had withdrawn from the Church, and had lost a very large sum of money at Ascot, was no secret whatever in Tunnleton. The latter, Dick Madingley had taken care should reach that town, where he hoped it might do Maurice considerable harm. He was not aware that Enderby had severed all connection with it, but the blackening of Maurice's character was a thing to which he was ready to devote himself ungrudgingly. But Miss Molecombe looked back upon Maurice's misdeeds, when they came to her knowledge, with a species of reverence. We all understand it. The petty sinners regard the great ones with a quiet awe. And the mild gamblers of the race-course revere the magnates of the turf, whose chief claim to celebrity lies in the fact that they bet in thousands, instead of wagering the more modest stakes of their fellows. Even mere boys who have lost some thousands in anticipation of their patrimony are looked at with morbid interest, and yet if there is one thing within every one's accomplishment it is the losing of money.

When General Shrewster heard the Ascot story he wrote a few sensible lines to Maurice, in which, while regretting that his warning had been so quickly found too prophetic, he repeated Bob Grafton's advice of "total abstinence," and further added, "There is trouble arising in South Africa, and you should hold yourself in readiness to take advantage of the earliest opportunity of volunteering that may arise. Count upon me to back you in this. Now, to help yourself. I have heard that you wield a smartish pen of your own. Can't you get an appointment from one of the daily papers, should these rumours turn out true? It would be no detriment to you as an extra aid, remember, to be in possession of the ear of a prominent daily. Take my advice, and look after the second string at once, and, if you can't speak whatever the lingo

of those parts may be, well, pretend you can."

Maurice was thunderstruck as he finished this letter. Mr. Greville, in his Memoirs, recalls how Epsom and Newmarket utterly absorbs a man, and Maurice had forgotten for some days to take note of anything in the papers that did not bear upon the pursuit uppermost in his thoughts, but though he heeded them not, and the Government also troubled their heads but little about it, there were signs of stormy times on the Cape frontier. We were acting with our usual contempt for our neighbours, arrogantly sending a corporal's guard to put down a simmering insurrection which required a division to intimidate it.

It is our way, I suppose. We are so impressed with the manner in which a handful of policemen cow a London mob, that we believe a like handful of soldiers will suffice to strike terror into the hearts of our savage neighbours. We are astonished to find that, much as well-trained soldiers can effect by science and superior weapons, yet, when the foe, exulting in his numbers, has, reckless of loss, fought his way in to a hand-to-hand struggle, the barbarian's sinews are tougher than those of our own men. Overweening confidence and insufficient numbers have been the cause of more than one disaster to our arms, and first successes give courage to the enemy.

Here and there an old military man, who knew the country, shook his head, and prophesied that if Government did not stamp this little agitation out promptly they would find themselves involved in an awkward war before many weeks were over.

The croakers were right—these prophets of ill omen are at times—and when the cable flashed the news that a British regiment had been annihilated, the nation was one in demanding that the Zulu king should be at once brought to his knees. A mere question of time and troops, no doubt, but meanwhile those with a stomach for fighting were like to get their fill of it.

The story of the all but annihilation of the twenty-fourth, and heroic defence of Rorke's Drift, had not yet reached England, when General Shrewster wrote, but it followed pretty quickly on the heels of his letter, and Maurice saw now that the chance had come to him. As General Shrewster had foreseen, brigadiers, staff-officers, and newspaper correspondents, were all on the wing, and tumbling over each other in their anxiety to procure employment of some sort beyond the Tugela.*

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LEAGUER.

Ir England had been startled and Europe amazed at the terrible intelligence that the cable had flashed from South Africa, it was nothing to the dismay that spread through the country itself. In Natal the news of the disaster produced a positive panic. It was rumoured that the Zulu army, flushed with victory, had crossed the Tugela and were in a fair way to overrun the province. Paris and Berlin, as well as London, were aghast at the catastrophe. Even in civilized warfare it is rare to hear of the annihilation of a regiment, and, singular to relate, it was the same regiment that some thirty odd years before had died grimly fighting almost to a man in India, on the fatal field of Chillianwallah. That the scare

^{*}There is some little discrepancy in the time of the disaster of Isandhlwana, and history has had to bend here to the exigencies of fiction. I can only "Fairly acknowledge I

At school or college I Never was very precise in chronology."

should be pretty general through the provinces bordering on Zululand was excusable, considering that even the military leaders took a most gloomy view of the situation, and at once abandoned the

initiative for the defensive.

Had the Zulus of that time been led by one of those wild military enthusiasts who seem born to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm, they would have swept like a torrent across the Tugela, annihilating convoy after convoy in their triumphant march, but, according to the manner of barbarians, their first impulse, after striking a great blow, was to return home in triumph with their plunder. Our own Highlanders in the last century had a good deal of this feeling, and, though easy to gather for one supreme effort, were difficult to hold together for a continuous campaign.

Colonel Pearson, advancing into Zululand at the head of a long straggling convoy, had arrived as far as Etshowe, when he received news of the catastrophe of Isandhlwana, with orders to entrench himself where he was and to be prepared to bear the attack of the whole Zulu army. This the column did without loss of time, and for about a month was known to the outer world no more.

The first streaks of dawn were just visible in the heavens; the advanced sentries drop slowly in and report that all is quiet as far as they can ascertain, but every one knows that Etshowe is surrounded by a numerous and subtle foe; they have had too many proofs of late both of the numbers and cunning of their enemies not to be strictly on the alert; creeping up noiselessly through the night again and again, the Zulus had become only visible at the last moment, when, with a savage yell, they made a determined attempt to rush the entrenchments, but so far they had been invariably repulsed with heavy loss. As the sun tops the horizon and lights up the big rolling prairie, clothed for the most part in long grass, dotted here and there with mealie fields, one recognizes how easy it is for the savage foe to conceal his numbers, and, in the hours of darkness, steal up to the attack; but there are keen eyes and stout hearts behind those breastworks, and, as long as the cartridges and food hold out, there is little fear of the Zulus ever getting inside.

A tall, bearded man, clad in semi-military costume, stands resting his elbows on the parapet and eagerly scans the country through a field-glass, but apparently without discovering anything worthy of his attention. As he puts down his glass a quiet voice

by his side observes-

"Another night of tranquillity, Mr. Enderby?"

"Yes, sir," replies Maurice, as he turned and touched his cap to the veteran chief who stood beside him; "you don't suppose they

will raise the siege, do you?"

"Not a bit of it," replied the colonel; "I've had much experience on the frontiers, and the Zulus, like all barbarians, are full of tricks and stratagems. They are only trying to lull us into fancied

security. I wish we could hear something from the outside; we know less of what is going on than they do in London."

"And know, I should think, sir," replied Maurice, laughing,

" more about the Zulu army than most people."

"Ah," replied the chief, "we can't tell how much of that army we have got around us; except in small bodies we never catch much sight of them by day, and in the night attacks it is difficult to judge of their numbers. By the way, Shrewster, in his letter to me, told me your object in volunteering, and I've seen quite enough of you here to know that you have the makings of a good soldier. Now I can't say for certain, but the probability is in two or three days I shall want a volunteer on a very delicate mission; I don't disguise from you it's a risky one, but if you pull through all right it will count as a special bit of service, and strengthen your claim considerably for a commission."

"It's only too kind of you to give me the chance," replied Maurice; "I can only promise when the time comes to do my

level best."

"That'll do," said the chief; "only don't forget a cool head is the first essential in difficulties," and, with a slight nod, he walked away into the interior of the fort, leaving Maurice to wonder what

his special mission might prove.

It was rather a grim consultation at which the chief had next to preside. He had to point out to his second and third in command that their stock of provisions was getting low, and that, though he had no doubt they could hold Etshowe for months had they food, yet their ability to do so was now simply dependent on that fact.

"I don't like to do it, but I am afraid I shall be compelled to put the force upon half-rations. It is a sad necessity, for the men are hard-worked; you can't expect to get that out of either man

or horse unless they are well fed."

"No," replied one of the other officers; "moreover there is a good deal of sickness amongst both officers and men. They don't give in, but stick to their work pluckily enough, still they are not likely to improve upon half-rations."

"No," rejoined the chief, "but there is no sign of any relief for us as yet, and we do know that four weeks at the present issue of

food will bring us about to the end of our stock."

"That's true," replied the other, "and, even when we get an intimation that succour is on its way to us, it may be still some

time before it arrives."

"Quite so," said the chief, "and as it is clearly our business to hold out till the last I shall put the garrison on half-rations from to-morrow. It looks as if the massacre of Isandhlwana had been by no means the measure of our disasters. The commander-inchief would have surely contrived to communicate with us before this if there had not been further trouble."

Maurice's first experience of active service had been by no means

cheering. The march up to Etshowe had been all very well; riding through a strange country in which they might hourly expect to be attacked had a wild excitement about it which sent the blood coursing through the veins and made the pulses tingle, but this being cooped up, like a rat in a corner, the dull and depressing routine of siege life, is about the hardest trial that a soldier has to endure, followed as it usually is by all the privations of insufficient food et cetera. As for fighting, the Zulus, to do them justice, took care they should have plenty of that. Maurice, like all his comrades, knew that they were fighting for their very lives. Their fierce foes had already shown them how they construed "washing their spears," and every one in Etshowe knew that if the place was taken the Zulus would spare no one within its ramparts. Men die hard when fighting for their lives, and so far the Zulus had found Etshowe a stubborn nut to crack. But they knew as well as its beleaguered defenders that there was a limit to their provisions, and waited patiently till the time should come when the garrison would have to choose between surrender or that last expedient of the desperate, an attempt to cut their way through.

About two days after the order for half-rations had been given out some of the soldiers were suddenly struck with some singular flashes that illumined the sky in the direction of the lower Tugela, and no sooner was this fact communicated to their officers than the entire garrison crowded out to see what could be made of it. officers welcomed it with a great sense of relief. It was apparent to them that their own people were striving to communicate with them by means of the heliograph. It is true that so far they were unable to interpret the signals, but one thing was clear, assistance was approaching, and that one fact did more to raise the spirits of the gallant little band than even luxury in the shape of rations could have done. There is something terribly depressing in utter isolation to most of us, but nothing perhaps tries the soldier more heavily when besieged than complete ignorance of what his friends on the outside may be doing on his behalf. The leaguered force at once attempted to reply in similar fashion, but the afternoon wore away without their being able to interpret the signals. however, was clear: that friends were signalling to them, and evidently recognized their flashes in response. Whether they were understood any better than they understood the heliographs of the relieving column they were of course unable to judge, but that assistance was close at hand was beyond all doubt. The next day was a repetition of the abortive signalling, and still, much to his disgust, the commandant found himself in ignorance of what the advancing column was trying to say to him. As far as they could judge by the flashes, the signallers were stationary, and had not moved since yesterday; they were some twenty miles off, apparently, but that was rather a matter of guess-work. The commandant was much exercised in his mind on this point. Was

the relieving force held in check by the Zulus, and were they inviting him to co-operate in a grand attack? Was this the meaning of the quiet of the last two or three days: had the Zulus withdrawn from around Etshowe with a view to giving battle to the relieving force? If so they were probably lying more or less masked on the road leading to the fort. It was, he thought, imperative that he should communicate with the leader of the advancing column. He must send a messenger—a dangerous errand no doubt, still a resolute, well-mounted man might get through, carrying with him such explanations as would make all signalling easy for the future, and who would also be able to speak as to the exact state of things in Etshowe. He had been prepared to do this before when without the knowledge that assistance was so near at hand, and it seemed to him still more necessary to send that messenger His mind was soon made up, and then he sent for Maurice. Briefly he explained what he wanted.

"It's not a nice ride for you, Enderby, and you'll want both sabre and revolver ready to your hand, but I think if you keep your head cool you'll pull through. A good deal depends upon your horse, and you've my authority to take your choice of any one in the fort."

"Thank you, sir, but I think my own horse looks as well as any of them; he's got a bit of blood about him that'll serve me well if it comes to a pinch. I had plenty of opportunities of trying him on the way up, and know he'll do his best in case of need."

"Good! You'd better start just before daybreak. I will have the road patrolled so as to ensure you a clear start. My impression is that you will see no Zulus till you get some miles from here." "You don't think they have withdrawn from around Etshowe?"

inquired Maurice.

watch us, but the bulk of it is withdrawn to give battle to the force coming up to relieve us, and it is as you near that you will run the greatest danger. You had better spend the afternoon concerting a simple code of flashes with Chamberlain; he seems to understand heliograph better than any one else, and to thoroughly establish communication is, of course, the chief object."

And with a quiet nod the commandant dismissed Enderby for

the present.

As for Maurice, he left the room in search of Chamberlain as gay as a lark. A somewhat hazardous piece of service it might be, but it may be doubted whether there was an officer in the garrison who would not have been delighted to change places with him. In war men are called upon to risk their lives day by day, to die with their face to the foe, with the brief epitaph that they have done their duty, or if fortunate enough to escape shot and steel to be rewarded with the homely but pithy observation "that it was all in the day's work;" but here was a chance. The man who carried out this mission successfully would be sure of praise,

and had a fair promise of being mentioned in the despatches. Maurice knew well that in most callings the man who can carry a still tongue is wont to be most trusted by his superiors. To no one of his comrades did he confide his forthcoming departure save Chamberlain. That officer it was necessary to acquaint with the orders he had received, to explain the urgent need of his being instructed in heliography to the extent that time would allow; and before sundown he had mastered sufficient of the science of flashes to feel certain that to the extent of a simple code communication would be established between Etshowe and the relieving force, should he only succeed in reaching it. That done, he jealously superintended the doing-up of his horse, and then, having finished his own supper, threw himself on his pallet to snatch a few hours' rest before starting on his perilous ride.

CHAPTER X L.

A PERILOUS RIDE.

It wanted considerably over an hour to daybreak when Maurice was aroused from his slumbers and told that the chief was awaiting him. A toilet is a brief and hasty ceremony at such times, and a very few minutes elapsed before he followed the orderly across the open space to that wing of the mission-house which

served as the commandant's quarters.

"I have nothing much more to say to you," said the veteran, as he acknowledged Maurice's salute, "than to wish you God-speed and shake hands. You will tell how it is with us here to whoever commands the relieving column. Say we can last on the half-ration for three weeks yet, and that they will never turn us out of the fort except by starvation. Take an old hand's advice—spare your horse on the early part of your road so as to keep all the powder you can in him for the time when you will have to trust to his heels. Let the first flash you can send us announce your own safety. The picket report that they can get no touch of the enemy as far as they have been along the road; and now God bless you and send you safe through; the sooner you are in the saddle the better," and as he concluded the veteran extended his hand and exchanged a hearty hand-grip with Maurice.

Enderby's final preparations were soon concluded. Some two or three hours would either bring him to his destination or see him in the hands of the Zulus if alive. There was no necessity, therefore, for carrying food with him, and it was best, he thought, to travel as light as possible. He confided a letter to Chamberlain to be forwarded to his wife in the event of the worst happening to him, and then, having looked carefully to girth and bridle, swung himself into the saddle, and made his way quietly to the gate. A quiet "good luck" from the officer commanding there, and then Maurice found himself without the entrenchments and fairly

started on his errand. He jogged gently along at starting, peering into the darkness on every side, for it was now that blackest hour of the night which heralds the dawn, which from late experience he knew was a favourite time with the Zulus for commencing their attack. He would have been troubled to have increased his speed much at present, for it was just as much as he could do to make out the track, which even in broad daylight was by no means very well defined. More than once he turned in his saddle and checked his horse, while he looked back to see if there was any stir at Etshowe, but no—all was still. He had been travelling now as far as he could guess for about an hour, and though the fort was long lost to sight, yet his ear must have caught the sharp rattle of musketry and the fierce yells of the foe

had there been any attack upon it.

He hailed the first streaks of dawn with no little satisfaction. If the Zulus were more likely to catch sight of him by daylight, he, on the other hand, was more likely to blunder into their midst in the darkness. Then, again, with light it would be possible to travel considerably faster. As far as he could guess he was now some four miles from the fort, and he hoped had traversed a fourth or so of his journey. And now the sun peeps above the horizon; the stars have faded away; a few minutes more and another day has begun. Maurice pulls up his horse, and gazing around takes stock of the situation. He can see Etshowe behind him, and in the clear morning air can almost make out the sentries on its ramparts; but with that exception there is not a sign of a human being. He can see the track plainly enough now, and just at present it seems to be pretty fair going. Putting his horse into a hand-canter, he rides gaily forward, and is half inclined to already deem the dangers of his expedition overrated. Still, he had seen too much of the cunning of the Zulus to relax his vigilance, and knows that as yet he has not come to where, in the opinion of his chief, he might expect to be waylaid by the enemy. He has got over another three miles in easy fashion, and is approaching a place where the road bends considerably to the right. Round that bend he thinks it quite possible he may catch sight of the distant laager of the relieving column. Suddenly he fancies he sees a black head appear for a second above the crop in a mealie field to the right. It disappears almost instantaneously, but another minute convinces him he was not mistaken, as in half-a-dozen places the dark heads appear for an instant above the crest of the corn, and then as suddenly vanish. Yes, he has come upon the enemy now, and then it flashes across him what is happening. The Zulus have caught sight of him, and are hurrying under cover of the mealies to intercept him just beyond the bend. He knows now that the crisis has arrived, and that Bay Robin will be called upon to gallop in real earnest.

He shakes up his horse; and, as Bay Robin settles down to his

stride, Maurice thanks Heaven that he has a stretch of fair galloping ground in front of him. A yell bursts from the throats of the Zulus as Maurice's quickened pace tells them they are discovered. Throwing off all further attempt at concealment, they come trooping in irregular order through the mealies as fast as they can. But if the corn had afforded them cover in the first instance, and so nearly compassed Maurice's destruction, it stood to him now. It hindered his foes from progressing as fast as they otherwise would; the fleet-footed Zulus could not utilize their speed as they might have done in the open ground, and Maurice saw, with a gleam of exultation, that, with the exception of some half-dozen of the foremost, he should easily outstrip the remainder. These were straining every nerve to intercept him just below the bend. Should they fail to arrest him there, Bay Robin would speedily bear him beyond their reach.

"There'll be a tussle for it, my horse," muttered Maurice, as he bent forward in the saddle and patted the animal's neck; "we're tailing them off nicely, but they haven't near so far to go as we have, and those leading fellows will be in time to throw their assegais at us. We must chance it, and take very good care that, if their assegais don't hit us the first time, they have no chance to

throw a second."

It turned out even better than Maurice had anticipated. He is round the bend, and then it becomes evident that he will have to deal with no more than three of his enemies. Two of them emerged from the mealie field and gained the edge of the track just as Enderby comes well round the bend. They are still some hundred and fifty yards from him, while the third man has not as yet emerged from the corn. Drawing his sabre, and setting spurs to his horse, with a wild cheer Maurice dashes straight at them. Breathless with their long run, the two Zulus are not as accurate as usual in their aim. A couple of assegais whizz harmlessly past the horseman. One of the two, a big powerful fellow, makes a desperate snatch at Bay Robin's bridle, only to go down before a swashing sabre-cut that lays his right cheek open in grizzly fashion.

"'But sabres shall swing,
And head-pieces ring,
When the gallants of England
Are up for their King,'"

muttered Maurice with a grim laugh in all the intoxication of battle, as he and Bay Robin sped merrily onwards. Forward—away—onward, onward, the best part of a mile is past before Maurice drew bridle, then the broken ground dictated a slackening of speed. Sheathing his sabre he looked back and saw that the Zulus were gathered round the fallen man, still brandishing their spears at him, but they had evidently abandoned all idea of pursuit. Once more he laughed in his beard, but still pricked on as quickly as he could conveniently go over the uneven track. Once

more he comes to a stretch of smoother ground, and again presses his horse to a hand-gallop. Bay Robin is barely in his stride when he swerves across the track so suddenly that a less practised horseman than Maurice would very likely have been unseated. It was well the gallant brute had done so, for half-a-dozen assegais whizzed past his rider that would in all probability have taken effect had it not been for Bay Robin's being startled by the gleam of the spears in the long grass to his right. As it is, from some cause or other, the horse nearly blunders on his knees, and halfa-dozen Zulus rush forward to seize their victim. Quick as thought Maurice draws his revolver from the holster. Crack! crack! and the two nearest bite the dust. Bay Robin recovers himself by a supreme effort, and gallops on with unabated vigour, but it is not for long. Another half-mile and his rider feels the gallant horse faltering in his stride. He turns an anxious glance back, but his foes, singularly enough, have already vanished. He pulls Bay Robin together, but feels that he is dying away under his hand. What has come to him? He lurches in his gallop, and as Maurice pulls him up is beginning to sprawl after the fashion of a drunken His rider has barely time to jump from his back ere the honest brute pitches heavily forward, and then rolls over on his It it clear enough now, the cruel assegai is quivering in his flank, and Maurice knows that his charger's last course is run.

He looks round. Small chance of his escape now, he thinks. His foes can be but a few hundred yards behind him, and as soon as they see he is dismounted, there is little likelihood but what they will start in hot pursuit; although he can see nothing of them he has small doubt but that they are watching his movements. Singular, he thinks, that a fierce yell of triumph did not burst from their throats as they witnessed the fall of his horse. He drew the revolver from his holster, loosened his sabre in its sheath, and made up his mind to sell his life dearly. That they would be on him before many minutes he looked upon as certain; and then he cast a despairing look along the track in front of him. Ah! could it be possible? Yes, he felt sure of it—a long way off yet, but there was a laager straight ahead. Could he gain it?

and Maurice strode manfully forward.

Every moment he expected to hear the whizz of an assegai; but no; he trudged along a good mile and still his foes made no sign. Again and again he looked back but could see nothing of them, and at last the truth dawned upon him: the Zulus were ambushed with a view to attacking the relieving column as soon as it was once more on its march; they were afraid to follow him further for fear of discovering themselves. Maurice's spirits arose; let him gain the laager and the information he brought with him was of the highest value, not only to those whom he had left but to those he would join.

He had not trudged far before he espied a small party of horse-

men riding leisurely towards him; it was evident, moreover, that they had already caught sight of him; although some distance off he felt pretty sure that these were friends. Another minute and two of them, detaching themselves from the group, came galloping towards him. The foremost was an officer, and, as he reined up his horse close to Maurice, he exclaimed-

"Who are you and where do you come from?"

"I am a messenger from Etshowe," replied Maurice, "and the bearer of important news for your general."
"When did you leave the fort?"

"A little before daybreak." "They were all right then?" asked the officer eagerly. "Yes, and quite able to hold out for some time yet."

"Ah, we've been trying to communicate with you for the last two or three days, but our people can't understand your flashes.

You haven't come on your feet, surely?"

"No, I left a good horse on the road about three miles back. It was a squeak and I had to rile for it. I pulled through, but they killed my horse, and a right good one he was, too."

"Ah, you came through the Zulus?" said the dragoon; "I

suppose they lie pretty thick between us and the fort?"

"Yes," laughed Maurice as he tramped onwards by the side of his companion's horse; "you will find them thick as thieves some

few miles ahead."

"Well," replied the other, "the general will be glad to see you; he is very anxious, I know, to get news from Etshowe. It was a great relief to us all to get those answering flashes on the heliograph; we couldn't make out what you said but they showed you were all right, and we're within a long day's march of the fort now. We are advancing rather slowly because we expect to come in contact with the enemy every hour. Now if you will follow with my orderly I'll gallop back to camp and report that you are on your way to the general. You've a good three miles before you yet, but I'll send out a horse to meet you, which will save you a bit," and, so saying, the dragoon set spurs to his horse and galloped off with his news.

And now, as Maurice neared the laager, it was evident that all the preparations for the march had been suddenly suspended.

His former acquaintance met him with a led horse.

"Jump on," he cried; "the general wants to see you immediately. You are upsetting all the programme," he continued laughing; "the orders are for the camp to stand fast while the rocket-troop and horse artillery go forward and search all this long grass right and left of us."

Thus adjured Maurice swung himself into the saddle, and, guided by his new friend, found himself in less than a quarter-of-

an-hour at the laager.

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY,

THE season is over, and its distant echoes are now in memory only, unless, indeed, we count those faint and far ones that reach us from Norway, from Scotland, from Normandy and other resorts of society when it escapes from those miles upon miles of brick and stucco which some one has facetiously called "the little village." The echoes of memory are to be listened to in this instance, and to be treasured; for has not the season been that of the Jubilee year of our Queen? Have we not been reading a radiant page of history during the hot days of June and July, as we simmered and gasped in the unwonted and tropical heat? That the Queen of England is also Empress of India would seem to have been borne in mind by the weather itself in this Jubilee year. The slow-swinging punkah has been sighed for, and the siesta has become quite an institution with the weak or the lazy. A ride or drive before breakfast would have been acceptable to many of us, but Mrs. Grundy, that familiar friendly fiend of ours, who herds us all so jealously and so vigorously into the right path-Mrs. Grundy disapproves of anything out of the common. A ride at four o'clock in the morning, perfectly correct in India, would be regarded as quite an impropriety here, where the proper time for "an airing," as some old-fashioned folks still call it, is in the afternoon, when the sun is at his very brightest, and has had several hours wherein to make the atmosphere almost insupportable to man and beast, to say nothing of women and children.

The fact is, we do not understand hot weather in England. We fret and fuss and fume over it, make it the subject of constant lamentation, and never allow ourselves to forget it for a single instant. If only we could induce all our friends to enter into a compact not to mention the heat, we should keep twice as cool as when people are perpetually coming up to us gasping, or snorting, or deeply sighing, or taking all-rounders with handkerchiefs, according to idiosyncrasy. Then, again, we are a restless nation. We do not comprehend the delights of sitting still, as Orientals do. The dolce far niente is with us ignominiously translated by the ugly and uneasy little verb "to potter." We cannot be comfortably quiet and lymphatic, we Islanders, defying the thermometer. We are a land of shopkeepers, and treat our

minutes as merchandise. Even those of us who have leisure have lost the art of enjoying it, and, losing that, we lose more than

we imagine.

Now what has the Jubilee season brought us, besides the Hessian fly? Among the novelties is the new hansom, which, when open, has a remarkable resemblance to the stocks in which evildoers were fastened long ago. The revival of the frock-coat is another outcome of a season when London was full of foreigners, with whom this garment has always been an institution. It has not been seen much in black, pale grey being the tint in which it

has chosen to revisit the glimpses of the moon.

In ladies' dresses there are principally negations to record. The idiotic hump at the back, for which we were indebted to some man-milliner, has almost entirely disappeared among the well-dressed, and steels will soon be quite things of the past. What influence the hot weather has had upon this protuberance it would be hard to say, for it had already begun to dwindle before the great heat came upon us. When it did arrive, the stuffed cushion that upheld the draperies became an intolerable burden, and many persons who had previously thought it rather pretty and graceful to wear a hump like a camel, suddenly became alive to its inartistic absurdity, and reduced its dimensions to about one-third of their original proportions.

The sailor hat has reached its apotheosis during this Jubilee season. That hat is seen everywhere, on every variety of woman. It frequents the churches, where the widely different angles at which it is worn distract the devout and amuse the other contingent. It has haunted the park and the picture-galleries, and though it is really a most suitable and sensible summer headgear, its all-pervadingness causes the weary gazer to rebel against it. If only old ladies, with hardly any hair, would abstain from it, things would be better; and if girls whose mirrors tell them bitter truths would find some more becoming kind of headgear, their own state would be more gracious and the eye of the public would glare less viciously at those who dare to offend it by lack-

ing the great gift of beauty.

The attractions of Wild West Brompton do not pall upon the Londoner; the place is as fashionable as ever on these broiling August days. Those who dine at the Welcome Club speak in terms of high appreciation of the commissariat, and realize how delightful a thing it is to eat the great meal of the day in a spot where a few paces only divide them from the soft grass and beautiful old trees of the gardens of the club. It is not every Londoner to whom it is granted to have a wide green space beside or near his home, and the cigar-lit stroll post-prandial is a pleasant thing to the prisoner of bricks and stucco. It has been, and still is, quite the correct thing to snatch a fearful joy from the vicissitudes of the switchback railway and to enjoy the fitful fever

of the toboggan slide. These sports of the Wild West promise to

become a veritable institution among us.

The theatres have suffered from the intense heat of the past two months. Few people have cared to face the broiling atmosphere of an indoor entertainment while the thermometer was recording eighty-something in the shade, and actually bursting in the endeavour to do its recording duty in the sun. With the cool days of the return from villeggiatura will come a rush for the theatres, all anxious to see what was missed during the season. Meantime there is abundance of attraction for the inveterate playgoer, who would rather simmer in a theatre every night in the year than miss a single play or even the lights and shades thrown upon a performance by a change of cast. The musically-named "Bells of Haslemere" promise to ring out the summer and ring in another season at last. The immortal play, "Our Boys," is among the revivals, and "The Colonel" has come with it from the shadows of the past. Beautiful Mrs. Brown-Potter promises us a new play a few weeks later. When she is sufficiently mistress of her art, in which she is so rapidly improving, to carry with her on the stage the full and subtle charm that is hers in real life she will indeed astonish those critics who were so hard upon her. We are to have "Dandy Dick" again in the autumn, more accessible to most of us than when it was at the Court Theatre. Mrs. Bernard-Beere will probably again delight her audiences with her marvellous impersonation of the heroine of Mr. Phillips' novel; and "The Red Lamp "will shine once more under the careful tendance of Mr. Beerbohm Tree. These and other dramatic attractions make the return home a thing to be regarded with anticipative pleasure, delightful as is the sojourn by the sea on these burning days.

Crowded are the "pleasure resorts" of Great Britain and Normandy, and with greater zest than ever do bathers bathe, swimmers swim, and loungers lounge. The liberal allowance of moonlight we have had during this season, owing to fine and cloudless weather, must be responsible for the unusually large number of marriages that have been announced; or this epidemic of matrimony may perhaps be owing to the fact observed by every one, that there have been more pretty girls seen everywhere about this year than for many a long day. However this may be, it is certain that there is to be much marrying and giving in marriage in the autumn. The moon is the lovers' light, we are unanimously told by all the poets. The fair luminary is an inveterate matchmaker; the traces of her influence will be seen in the marriage

registers of this Jubilee year.

The glorious weather has perhaps had something to do with the all-prevalent good looks so very observable. Beauty has been able to go beautifully in festive robes. Pink cheeks and rosy lips look their softest and brightest when the sun is shining upon

them through the airy lacework of a sunshade; and faces that began to grow pale and tired at the end of those busily pleasant months in London soon grew bright again at Cowes or Trouville. The yachting dresses of this year have touched perfection in their admirable simplicity, and many a man who has failed to realize that a girl in ball-dress or smart park frock is an unusually pretty one has had his eyes suddenly opened to the fact when he sees her in a neat Redfern, in which all the points of correct nautical costume have been feminized and adapted to the graceful figure and the beautiful *chevelure* of the average English girl.

To the brilliant season we say farewell with less sorrow because next year brings another Jubilee, that of the Queen's coronation; and the celebration of the Silver Wedding of our Prince of Wales

and his dear and sweet Princess.